4X4
AUST

2026 NAVARA
REVEALED

SUPER DUTY

GCM: 8000KG
GVM: 4500KG
TOWING: 4500KG

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4X4 UTE OF THE YEAR

12 MIDSIZE 4X4 UTES PUT TO THE TEST

SUMMER 2025
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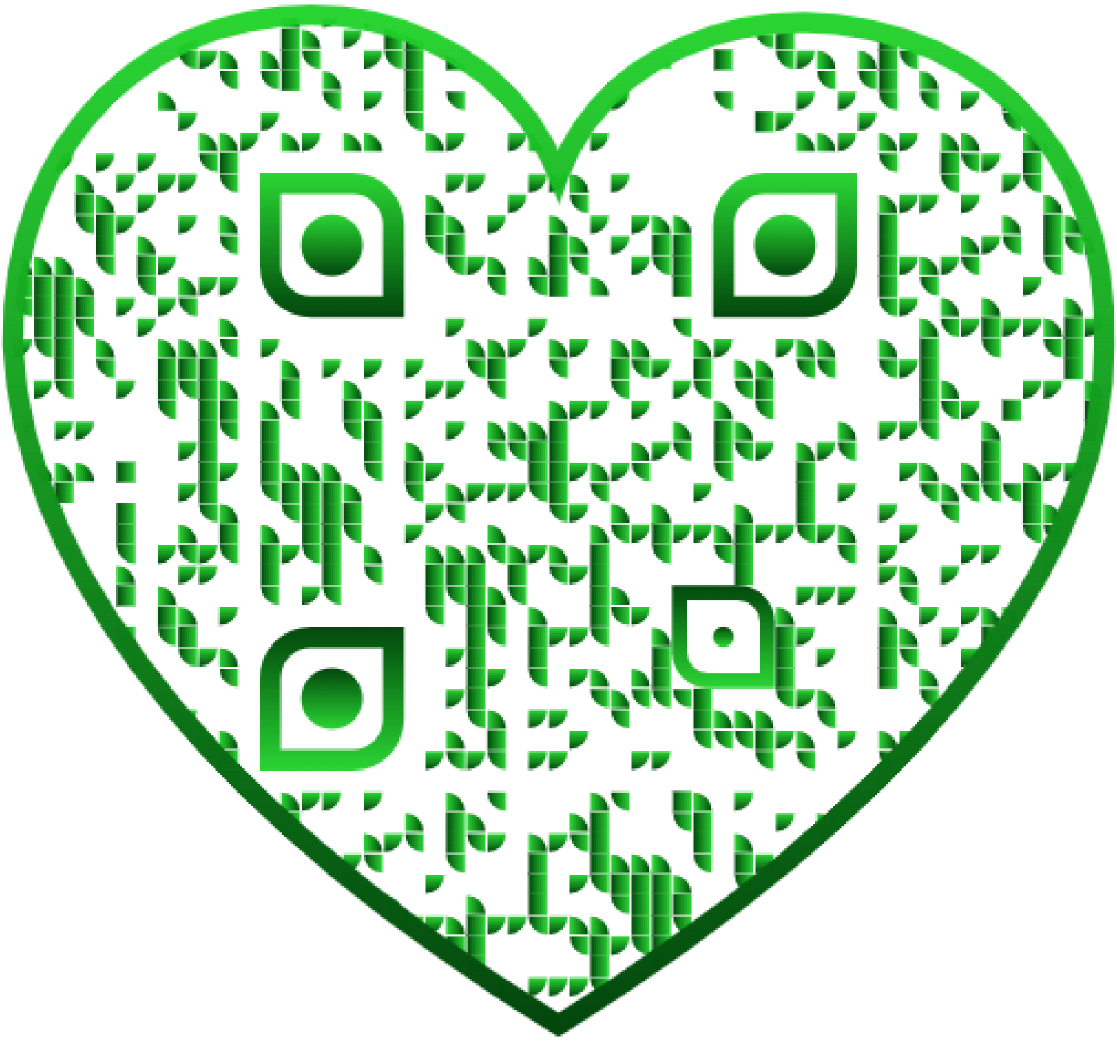

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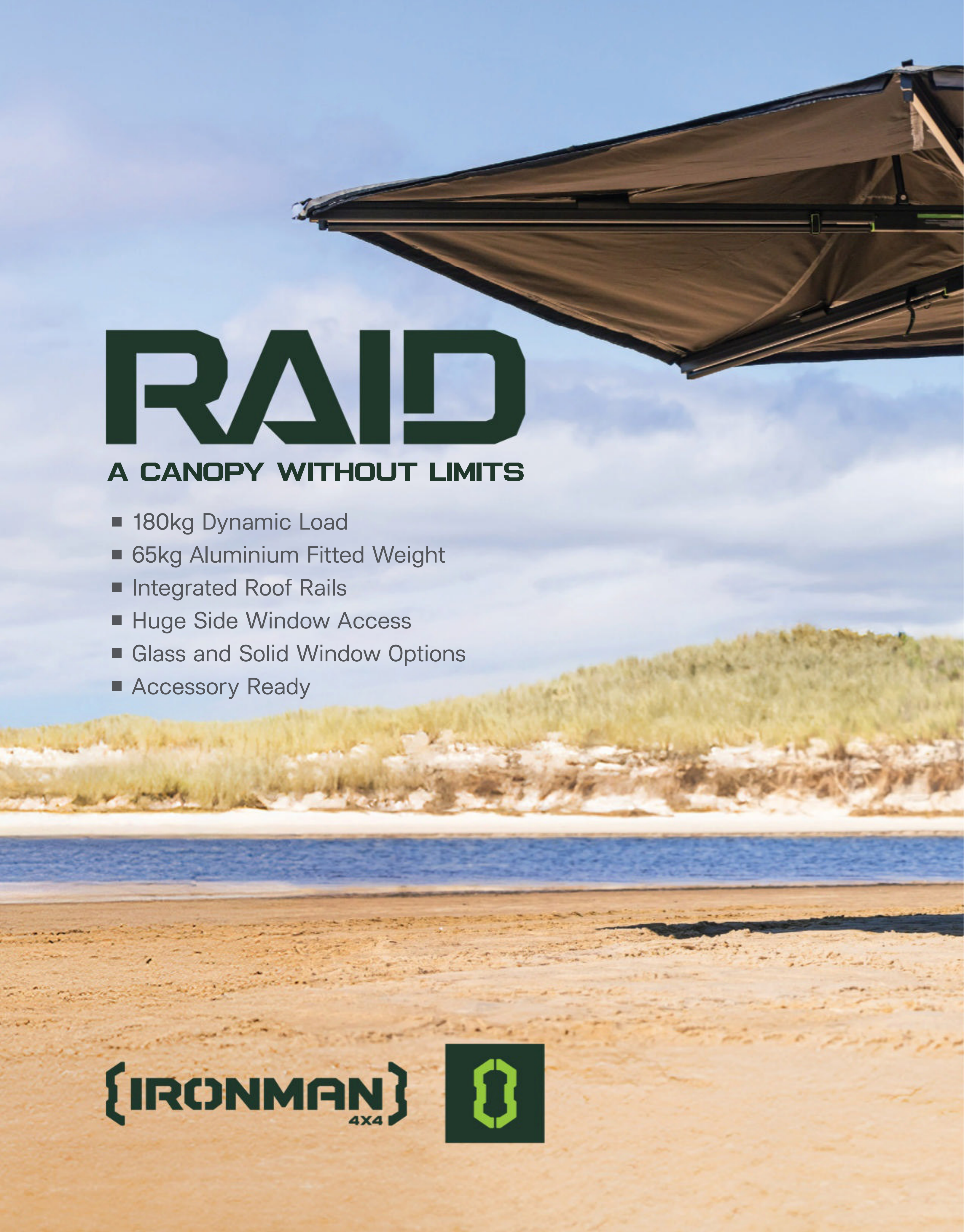

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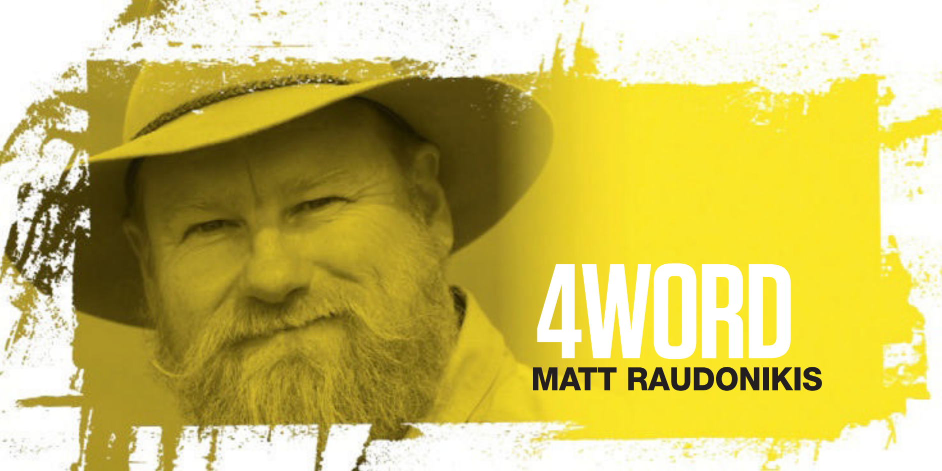

4WORD

MATT RAUDONIKIS

HORSES FOR COURSES

At the start of 2025, Toyota Australia sales and marketing bossman Sean Hanley stated that Australia was set to reach "peak ute sales" on the back of yet another year of the Toyota HiLux and Ford Ranger dominating new-car sales in this country. It looks like business as usual heading into the end of 2025, with the two popular utes again topping the sales charts – and that trend is set to continue into the new year, with the new HiLux coming on line and Ford introducing fresh Ranger variants.

Mr Hanley was pointing to a slowing in ute sales driven by the re-emergence of midsize all-wheel-drive SUVs such as the RAV4. This category now sits second behind 4x4 utes in overall sales and, for most private buyers, they make far more sense than a 4x4 ute.

While utes are certainly practical and versatile vehicles, they are heavily compromised as daily family cars.

The cabins of midsize utes are a major compromise, particularly in the back seat, where most lack the space needed to carry adults – or adult-sized kids – in comfort over long distances. Yes, some of the newer utes are arriving with larger cabins and sliding rear seats to improve comfort, but they will never match the space or seat-back angle of an equivalent-sized 4x4 wagon.

While the internal size creates compromises, so do the external dimensions. These utes are big and getting bigger, and using one as your daily family runabout and shopping hauler can be a real pain. It's fine if you rarely visit a shopping-centre carpark, but it quickly becomes an annoyance – and a risk of damage – if you do it regularly.

The long wheelbase of double-cab 4x4 utes also compromises their off-road ability, with low ground clearance and a poor ramp-over angle, while their IFS front-ends typically lack wheel travel and traction.

While ute tubs are large enough to carry plenty of gear, they're not secure unless you fit a canopy or roller shutter, and the GVM of most utes limits how much you can actually carry without resorting to further modifications.

I've always compared double-cab 4x4 utes to the venerable Swiss Army knife: they offer plenty of functions and gadgets, but none of them work as well as a single tool designed specifically for the job.

The 12 utes in our 4x4 Ute Of The Year test presented us with a sea of compromises.

Ford has the right idea in creating derivatives of the Ranger ute that are better suited to specific tasks. The Ranger Raptor sacrifices load capacity to deliver a superior ride and far better off-road performance, while the new Ranger Super Duty trades ride quality for unrivalled GVM and towing capacity. The Ranger SD and Raptor each have a more focused design and engineering brief, resulting in vehicles that do a far better job of their intended roles.

While regular Rangers and other utes of their ilk will be better for 90 per cent of users, they will never do any one job especially well. The Ranger Raptor and Super Duty, on the other hand, excel at the tasks they were built for.

Matt

4X4 AUSTRALIA

"4x4s, the places you can take them, and the gear to get you there"

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4X4 UTE OF THE YEAR
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4CAST

NEWS AND VIEWS

NEW NAVARA REVEALED

NISSAN HAS WHIPPED THE COVERS OF ITS D27 NAVARA… PLUS A WARRIOR CONCEPT

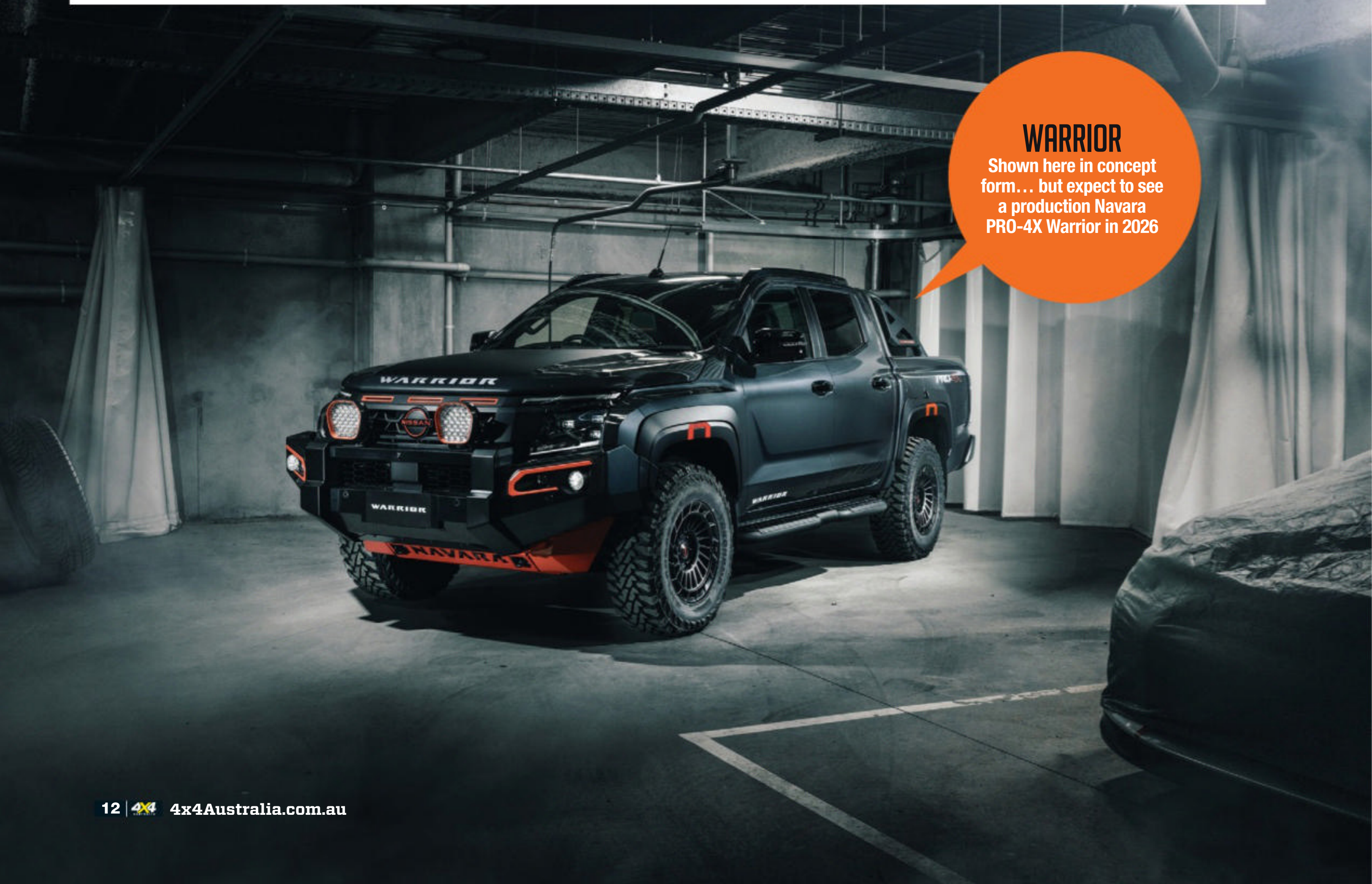
Nissan has used Australia to pull the wraps off its brand-new D27 Navara, with the covers coming off at a live event that was also streamed around the world.

As expected, the Navara is heavily based on the Mitsubishi Triton (Nissan calls it an "Alliance platform"), with no sheetmetal or mechanical changes from the Mitsubishi. The one exception is local suspension input from Premcar – the Melbourne-based engineering outfit that created the Patrol and Navara Warrior hot-rods – with new twin-tube dampers replacing the Triton-spec units.

Very little was given away at the unveiling, but we know there will be an ST-X, a PRO-4X and likely an entry-level variant as well. A high-end concept shown at the same time confirms Premcar has also developed a Warrior version of the new model. Beyond that, specifications and pricing remain largely unknown.

Giving the Navara a Nissan face has been achieved via familiar design cues, including the three slots on the leading edge of the bonnet and the corporate grille. At the rear, C-shaped tail-lights are the easiest way to distinguish a Navara from a Triton (badging aside).

Mechanically, it's all Triton-spec – including the 2.4-litre bi-turbo diesel with 150kW and 470Nm, a combined fuel figure of 7.7L/100km and a six-speed automatic transmission featuring Mitsubishi's Super-Select system (rebadged by Nissan as Super 4WD Terrain Selector), with seven driver-



WARRIOR
Shown here in concept form… but expect to see a production Navara PRO-4X Warrior in 2026

selectable modes and the ability to run in four-wheel drive on bitumen. A rear diff lock will be optional.

Payload varies between models, ranging from 950kg to 1047kg, and towing capacity is the expected 3500kg.

Ground clearance is 228mm, and the new model is larger than the D23 in all but overall height, with significantly more interior space. The tray is also 46mm longer.

Inside, you'll find a nine-inch central touchscreen, digital radio, a 360-degree camera and a seven-inch dashboard display. Wireless connectivity and wireless charging are included, all wrapped in a cabin that will be very familiar to Triton owners.

Accessories will be a major part of the Navara offering at dealership level, with big plans for canopies, racks, snorkels and proper bullbars.

The new Navara is expected in Australian showrooms in the first quarter of next year.

Checkout www.4x4australia.com.au for our first drive of the D27 Navara

TOBY PRICE SCORES FACTORY DAKAR DRIVE

TWO-TIME DAKAR CHAMPION TOBY PRICE WILL STEER A GAZOO RACING HILUX IN THE DAKAR RALLY

Toyota Gazoo Racing has confirmed it will field a fleet of GR HiLuxes in the 2026 Dakar Rally – and that Australian Toby Price will be behind the wheel of one of them.

The world's most gruelling motorsport event, the Dakar Rally, will kick off the FIA World Rally-Raid Championship season from 3-17 January.

The new HiLux is equipped with a reinforced transmission and a new tubular chassis, said to not only increase torsional stiffness and reduce weight, but also improve serviceability for quicker track-side fixes. Toyota says the vehicle is currently undergoing a comprehensive testing program to prepare it for the punishing demands of the Dakar Rally.

Toby Price retired from last year's Dakar in a customer HiLux, but this year returns with the works team.

"This is one of those pinch-yourself moments in my motorsport career," said Toby Price. "Dakar at this level is something only a very small group of people get to experience, and I'm extremely grateful to Toyota, Red Bull, Peter Kittle Motor Company and all our partners for making it happen.

"I'm really looking forward to heading back to Dakar for redemption after how our debut ended last year. Letting our partners down and seeing Sam [Sunerland, co-driver] suffer a concussion was tough, but it's only added to my motivation. Teaming up with Armand is incredible. He brings so much experience, and I truly believe we're in a great position to take it to the Dakar greats."

The three DKR GR HiLux vehicles will debut at Dakar before competing in Portugal (12-22 March), Argentina (24-29 May), Morocco (28 September-3 October) and Abu Dhabi (22-27 November) throughout the five-event 2026 W2RC season.

You can follow Toby's progress in the Dakar online at www.dakar.com and also via nightly reports on SBS TV .

AUSSIE GRIT

Toby Price is heading back to Saudi Arabia for redemption in the Dakar Rally after 2025's retirement

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TRAVEL BULLETIN

ALL THE LATEST 4X4 NEWS AND EVENTS

Now is the time to get out and about to enjoy this great land and support the communities. Experienced adventurer Ron Moon has listed a few upcoming highlights, as well as essential track info. As always, check with event organisers before locking in your plans.

This Track is subject to
Seasonal Road Closure
From June 12 to October 30 Inclusive.
Seasonal road closures are necessary to protect track surfaces, water quality and the environment, and to ensure driver safety.
Please contact the nearest Parks Victoria Office or phone 131963 if you require further information.
Parks
COBBERAS TRAIL
DRY WEATHER 4WD
PLAY GROUNDS PLAIN
QVH 975

HIGH COUNTRY TRACKS (VIC)

Several High Country tracks closures have been extended. In the Alpine NP, parts of Mt Pinnibar Track and Stony Creek Track remain closed between Walkers Road and the Mt Pinnibar summit, and between Mt Gibbo Track and Stony Creek near Tom Groggin Station.

Over in Snowy River NP, Betts Creek Track was due to reopen on 5 December – fingers crossed it stays on schedule.

For the latest updates visit www.parks.vic.gov.au.

COOPER CREEK FERRY (SA)

The ferry across Cooper Creek – currently the only way to travel from Marree to Birdsville via the Birdsville Track – is now operating.

Word is the ferry will remain in service for at least the next few months, until the Birdsville Track itself dries out and repair work can make it passable again.

Unlike previous ferries across the Cooper, this upgraded service isn't a free one, and you'll need to book a date and time online to make use of it.

Cost depends on your vehicle's size and type, with prices starting at $25.

TARKINE ROAD TRIP (TAS)

Tassie is one of the best states in Australia for a road trip, and the north-west offers some of its most spectacular scenery – including one of the wildest stretches of coastline in the country. Travelling through the Tarkine rainforest is another highlight, and the website below outlines just one of several route variations you can tackle.

For more adventurous and experienced four-wheel drivers, there are also several challenging tracks nearby waiting to be explored.

For detals head to happiestoutdoors.ca/tarkine-drive-in-tasmania.

CAMPING ON STRADBROKE ISLAND (QLD)

Minjerribah Camping, which manages all remote camping on the island, offers beachfront sites across six campgrounds located at Dunwich, Amity Point and Point Lookout.

For visitors with a 4x4, Minjerribah Camping also operates 200 campsites along the foreshore of Flinders Beach and 300 on the southern end of Main Beach. If traditional camping doesn't appeal, there are also glamping options available at Cylinder Beach, Adder Rock, Amity Point and Bradbury's Beach.

For more info visit minjerribahcamping.com.au.

FAVOURITE CAMP ON THE SOUTH COAST (NSW)

One of our all-time favourite camps on the NSW South Coast is Bittangabee Bay in Beowa National Park.

There are more than 30 unpowered sites at Bittangabee Bay, suitable for tents and camper trailers, along with toilets and fireplaces – though you'll need to bring your own firewood and drinking water.

There's great snorkelling nearby and plenty to explore. There is also the 32km Light to Light Walk, which traces the coast from Boyds Tower to Green Cape Lighthouse.

Brisbane
Darwin
Sydney
Alice Springs
Canberra
Perth
Melbourne

DRIVE THE HOLLAND TRACK (WA)

The Holland Track links Hyden (check out Wave Rock while you're there) with the historic mining town of Coolgardie in the Goldfields region of WA.

The 350km track remains a remote and often challenging route, especially after rain. There are plenty of camps along the way, so take your time and enjoy the changing scenery and vegetation.

The book *Explore the Holland Track and Cave Hill Woodlines* is a good guide.

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4X4 AUSTRALIA

4X4 UTE OF THE YEAR 2025

POWERED BY

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WORDS MATT RAUDONIKIS PHOTOS ELLEN DEWAR

We round up a dirty dozen midsize 4x4 utes to find the best of them

Love them or hate them, there's no denying midsize 4x4 utes are the hottest new-vehicle segment in Australia – and have been for years. The Ford Ranger and Toyota HiLux have dominated 4x4 sales for what feels like forever, often topping the overall new-vehicle charts month after month.

With such popularity comes competition, and the traditional 4x4 carmakers we've come to know and trust are now under attack from a barrage of new brands from Asian countries better known for producing affordable electronics than hard-working utes. Their vehicles are relatively cheap too, and in an era when most Australians are feeling the pinch, these new, more affordable options are getting a serious look-in.

It's been three years since we last conducted a *4X4 Australia* Ute Of The Year test, so with so many new contenders already on the market, we didn't wait for the next wave and we got it done before the end of 2025.

Even then, the new HiLux and Navara landed just weeks after our testing, along with a pair of Foton Tunlands, while BYD announced a new engine for its Shark disrupter and GWM continues to evolve and refine its ute range. I dare say we'll be running another of these tests sooner rather than later in 2026.

The Dirty Dozen

For 2025, we assembled a dozen of the most popular, significant and interesting midsize 4x4 utes to drive and rate. There are perennial favourites like the Ranger, HiLux, Navara and Triton in the mix, as well as a trio of plug-in hybrid (PHEV) utes and a few yet-to-prove-themselves newcomers, including the BYD Shark 6, Kia Tasman and LDV Terron 9.

Who's not here? This test focuses solely on the midsize category, and every ute on test is a dual cab – no single or extra cabs this time. Heavy-duty models like the LandCruiser 79, Ineos Quartermaster and Ranger Super Duty are also absent.

Also missing are the full-size American pick-ups, which we'll line up in a future test.

A couple of oddballs that really sit in classes of their own are the Ford Ranger Raptor and the Jeep Gladiator. There's nothing else quite like them on the market, so we'll give the Raptor the title of Best Performance Ute, while the Gladiator walks away with Best Off-Road Ute.

How They Are Judged.

As always with our 4x4 Of The Year testing, the vehicles aren't judged against each other but against established criteria. These five key criteria have been refined over more than 30 years to best evaluate and rate each vehicle on its own merits.

This approach allows us to fairly assess a broad range of vehicles within the same test. Each is scored individually against the criteria, and the results are then tallied to determine the overall standings.

VALUE FOR MONEY is judged according to a vehicle's equipment level, safety features and price relative to its direct competitors. Just because a vehicle has a high price doesn't mean it's not good value in the same way a cheap vehicle doesn't always represent good bang for your buck…

BREAKING NEW GROUND refers to advancements in technology and design. How a vehicle has raised the bar in the class it fits in and taken 4x4s to a higher level. If a vehicle has the latest safety features, worthy engine technology or an advanced driveline, it will score well here.

BUILT TOUGH refers to how strong a vehicle is and how well it will cope with the rigours of tough off-road driving environments. Will it be up to the task of carrying loads and outback travel, or fall apart at the first hurdle?

DOING THE JOB is judged according to a vehicle's design brief. Does a high-end luxury ute have all the latest in comfort and convenience features, and do those features work in the real world? How well a ute carries a load, accommodates a family or tows a trailer all come into play here.

BUSHABILITY is how well a vehicle is equipped for off-road travel. Suitability of the standard tyres for rough roads, touring range, available accessories and body protection are just some of the factors considered here. Is this a vehicle you would choose to drive around Australia the rough way, or is it best left to the suburbs?

Each vehicle is scored out of 10 for each of the criteria to give a total score out of 50.

Testing Procedure

With a dozen utes to evaluate, we changed things up from our usual point-to-point, week-long convoy. This time, testing took place over several days at a single location featuring dedicated off-road obstacles, a 45-minute mixed-surface road loop (gravel, sand and sealed roads), and a towing loop with an Offline Camper hooked up as a load.

Judging duties were handled by *4X4 Australia* editor Matt Raudonikis, veteran automotive tester and journalist Dave Morley, and towing and trailer specialist Tim Van Duyl.

WINNER UTE OF THE YEAR OVERALL

Ford Ranger Sport V6

$71,340 (+ORC)

As the only V6-powered ute in this year's test, the Ranger had a clear head start on the competition from the outset. The only other V6 diesel in this segment is the closely related Volkswagen Amarok – but VW didn't respond to our request to supply a vehicle for testing.

Yes, you'll pay more at the dealer when you choose the V6 engine over the equivalent four-cylinder, and you'll pay again at the pump with higher fuel use. But the benefits of the Ranger's V6 powertrain over the four-pot far outweigh the cost difference.

The Ranger V6 is smoother than any other ute in this group. The engine is torquey and composed, with a relaxed gait whether you're cruising along the highway, tackling a mountain road or hauling a heavy load. Paired with its superb 10-speed automatic transmission, the V6 Ranger remains unsurpassed in this class.

With full-time 4x4 via its dual-range transfer case and a swag of clever towing technologies, the Ranger V6 makes every task feel effortless.

The Ranger's interior is beginning to show its age when lined up beside some of the newer contenders, but it remains supremely comfortable, practical and easy to live with.

The Sport specification as tested here strikes a sweet spot between the popular XLT and the high-spec Wildtrak, offering everything you'd want for bush touring along with just enough luxury features to make long days behind the wheel a pleasure.

The Ranger V6 scored strongly for Doing the Job, Bushability and Built Tough. It was the standout performer when towing the Offline camper, showing impressive poise and composure on the roughest sections of the drive loop. When it came to hauling the Offline, the V6 Ranger was the clear winner.

Tim reported: "With a near-on one tonne payload, 6400kg GCM and 3500kg max tow capacity, the Ranger V6 starts off well and kicks ahead of the field with its integrated brake controller, towing checklists, easy to find (and use) Tow/Haul Mode and silky smooth V6."

"Owners can expect to use a bit more fuel than smaller engines – we saw around 12-14L/100km on our cycle which was about 2L/100 more than the best performer on the day – but go back to the numbers and this is one of the few utes that can carry north of 500kg (not taking into account ballweight) while towing at its limit… rare, impressive. It's the clear winner."

The Ranger Sport V6 is well equipped without being over the top and has the load-carrying and towing capacities to back it up, making it a premium yet practical 4x4 ute in every sense.

DRIVE MODES
2H
4H
4A
4L

V6
TERRITORY

4X4 UTE OF THE YEAR
2025
POWERED BY
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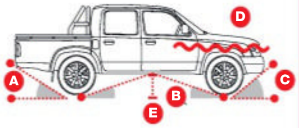
FORD RANGER SPORT V6	
PRICE	$71,340 +ORC
ENGINE	V6 diesel
CAPACITY	2993cc
MAX POWER	184kW @ 3250rpm
MAX TORQUE	600Nm from 1750 to 2250rpm
TRANSMISSION	10-speed automatic
4X4 SYSTEM	Selectable full-time dual-range 4x4
CONSTRUCTION	4-door ute on ladder chassis
FRONT SUSPENSION	Independent with wishbones and coils
REAR SUSPENSION	Live axle on leaf springs
TYRES	255/65R18 on alloy wheels
KERB WEIGHT	2264kg
GVM	3280kg
PAYLOAD	934kg
TOWING CAPACITY	3500kg
GCM	6400kg
SEATING CAPACITY	5
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	80L
ADR FUEL CONSUMPTION	8.4L/100km

FORD RANGER SPORT V6

A DEPARTURE ANGLE	25.6°
B RAMPOVER ANGLE	22.0°
C APPROACH ANGLE	30.0°
D WADING DEPTH	800mm
E GROUND CLEARANCE	234mm



TIM VAN DUYL

“With a near-on one tonne payload, 6400kg GCM and 3500kg max tow capacity, the Ranger V6 starts off well and kicks ahead of the field”

FORD RANGER SPORT V6

SCORE

39/50

WINNER UTE OF THE YEAR OVERALL

Toyota Hilux SR5 Premium

$63,260
(+ORC)

There's a good reason the Ford Ranger and Toyota HiLux consistently top Australia's sales charts – they're the best-built and best-equipped utes in their class by a fair margin, even if the competition is slowly closing the gap.

At the end of testing, the Ranger Sport and HiLux SR5 were separated by just half a point – and it was the Ranger's V6 engine that made the difference. Had we been testing a four-cylinder Ranger, the result could easily have gone the other way. The HiLux may be one of the oldest models in this field, soon to be replaced by an updated version as we write, but it remains an enduring workhorse – whether for business or pleasure.

The HiLux might not be as well equipped, refined or up to date as some of the newer models in this group, but it gets the job done efficiently and without fuss or complication.

The SR5 on test scored top marks for Bushability, and performed strongly in the criteria of Value for Money, Doing the Job, and Built Tough – making it a great all-rounder for both work and play.

It might not have any fancy towing technologies, but its 2.8-litre single-turbo engine pulled the camper confidently, while the chassis remained composed throughout.

In SR5 specification with the Premium Pack, the Hilux gains leather seats and an upgraded sound system, adding a touch of sophistication to its working-class platform while remaining practical and refreshingly uncomplicated.

On the towing front, Tim stated, "Straight up the Lux felt like it had more power than Toyota lets on. The SR5 could get up and go with the Offgrid Solitaire 14 on the back. The 2.8L has a good top-end and torque comes on hard. The Aisin six speed might be outgunned by the 10-speed in the Fords, and eight-speed in the Kia, but it's a fine thing for towing.

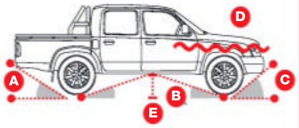
"Where it is let down is in its GCM (5850kg), kerb weight (2150kg) and claimed 3500kg tow capacity. Like almost every one-tonne ute out there, sure, it can tow 3500kg, but that leaves you with a little over 200kg to play with before you hit your GCM limit."

4X4 UTE OF THE YEAR
2025
POWERED BY
REDARC
REDWORKS

TOYOTA HILUX SR5 PREMIUM	
PRICE	$63,260 +ORC
ENGINE	Inline 4-cylinder turbo-diesel
CAPACITY	2755cc
MAX POWER	150kW @ 3000–3400rpm
MAX TORQUE	500Nm from 1600 to 2800rpm
TRANSMISSION	6-speed automatic
4X4 SYSTEM	Part-time dual-range 4x4
CONSTRUCTION	4-door ute and tub on ladder chassis
FRONT SUSPENSION	Independent double wishbone with coils
REAR SUSPENSION	Live axle on leaf springs
TYRES	265/60R18 on alloy wheels
KERB WEIGHT	2150kg
GVM	3050kg
PAYLOAD	900kg
TOWING CAPACITY	3500kg
GCM	5850kg
SEATING CAPACITY	5
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	80L
ADR FUEL CONSUMPTION	8.0L/100km

TOYOTA HILUX SR5 PREMIUM

A DEPARTURE ANGLE	25.8°
B RAMPOVER ANGLE	23.0°
C APPROACH ANGLE	29.0°
D WADING DEPTH	700mm
E GROUND CLEARANCE	216mm



TIM VAN DUYL

“Straight up the Lux felt like it had more power than Toyota lets on. The SR5 could get up and go with the Offgrid Solitaire 14 on the back.”

TOYOTA HILUX SR5 PREMIUM

SCORE

38.5/50

Kia Tasman X-Pro

$74,990
(+ORC)

Making a stunning debut in our Ute Of The Year testing was Kia's all-new Tasman. This is Kia's first attempt at building a midsize 4x4 ute in the style so popular in Australia, and for a first effort, the Tasman is an impressive result.

While the styling has proven to be controversial (that's putting it politely), it's what's under the skin that makes the Tasman stand out.

Available in four model grades with either a ute bed or a cab-chassis, Kia is covering all bases with its new offering. We selected the top-spec X-Pro Tasman for our Ute Of The Year test, as it's the model with more of an off-road focus in its equipment and specification. At around $75K, the Tasman X-Pro was one of the most expensive utes in this year's line-up.

Starting with a ladder-frame chassis featuring independent front suspension and a leaf-sprung live rear axle, Kia slotted a 155kW/441Nm 2.2-litre single-turbo diesel engine between the rails. It's paired with an eight-speed automatic transmission and a part-time, dual-range transfer case that also offers on-demand 4x4 for full-time all-wheel drive when needed.

It's a powertrain that's smooth and strong, even if it doesn't quite match the peak numbers of some rivals. It delivers exactly what's needed 99 per cent of the time when you're behind the wheel. It's only in that last one per cent – when you've got your foot flat or you're towing a heavy load – that the Kia feels like it could use a bit more grunt.

Off-road, its traction control and selectable rear diff lock work well with the suspension to deliver competent performance in the rough stuff. The absence of side steps on the X-Pro gives it more ground clearance than utes fitted with steps, meaning it didn't scrape over the steep humps where others did.

The interior of the X-Pro is wide and spacious, fully loaded with all the trimmings and features you'd expect from a new top-of-the-range model. Combined with its well-sorted suspension and drivetrain, the Tasman proves to be a superb ute for travelling and touring, no matter the terrain.

The Tasman X-Pro scored strongly in the Built Tough and Doing The Job categories, with solid sevens across the remaining three criteria.

When it came time to tow, Tim said, "Kia had every opportunity to make the Tasman the best ute on the market when it came to towing but they chose to compromise in power and suspension, two of the most critical aspects of what I do. With only 140kW the Tasman is underdone, if saved a little by the best-in-class eight-speed gearbox. The suspension, which is lauded for its compliant ride around town and off road, is just too soft for loads.

"The Offline Camper's 150kg ball weight didn't fully compress the Tasman's rear leaf suspension but it put a big dent in it.

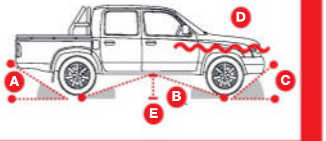
"It's not all bad though – the Tasman has some good tow-tech like an integrated brake controller, tow mode and basic pre-departure checklists. It has a strong GCM limit of 6300kg, which combined with a reasonable 2300kg kerb weight means it can actually (on paper) tow at its limit while carrying more than a driver alone. For those reasons it scraped into the top three for me."

4X4 UTE OF THE YEAR
2025
POWERED BY
REDARC
REDWORKS

KIA TASMAN X-PRO	
PRICE	$74,990 +ORC
ENGINE	Inline 4-cylinder turbo-diesel
CAPACITY	2151cc
MAX POWER	154kW @ 3800rpm
MAX TORQUE	440Nm from 1750 to 2750rpm
TRANSMISSION	8-speed automatic
4X4 SYSTEM	Part-time dual-range 4x4 with on-demand mode
CONSTRUCTION	4-door ute and tub on ladder chassis
FRONT SUSPENSION	Independent double wishbone with coils
REAR SUSPENSION	Live axle on leaf springs
TYRES	265/70R17 on alloy wheels
KERB WEIGHT	2237kg
GVM	3250kg
PAYLOAD	1013kg
TOWING CAPACITY	3500kg
GCM	6200kg
SEATING CAPACITY	5
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	80L
ADR FUEL CONSUMPTION	8.1L/100km

KIA TASMAN X-PRO

A DEPARTURE ANGLE	26.2°
B RAMPOVER ANGLE	25.8°
C APPROACH ANGLE	32.2°
D WADING DEPTH	800mm
E GROUND CLEARANCE	252mm



MATT RAUDONIKIS

While the styling has proven to be controversial (that's putting it politely), it's what's under the skin that makes the Tasman stand out

KIA TASMAN X-PRO

SCORE

37.5/50

WINNER BEST ADVENTURE UTE

Nissan Navara PRO-4x Warrior

$71,634 (+ORC)

The Navara PRO-4X Warrior was a surprise package in this year's test – although, in truth, it shouldn't have been. Previous testing of the now ageing and soon-to-be-superseded Nissan has shown it to be an excellent all-rounder and one you can confidently take straight from the showroom to the trails.

By teaming up with Melbourne-based engineering specialist Premcar, Nissan has transformed what might otherwise have been a mid-pack performer into a ute that all our judges genuinely enjoyed driving.

It's the modifications that Premcar makes to the Navara PRO-4X to create the Warrior that set it apart from every other ute in this test. The suspension was specifically developed by Premcar for the Warrior, transforming the chassis while adding extra ground clearance. Additional underbody protection helps prevent damage when that clearance eventually runs out.

A steel front bumper adds further protection, while the fitment of Cooper all-terrain tyres on bespoke Warrior wheels means it rolls straight out of the showroom with bush-ready rubber.

Judge Dave Morley said of the Warrior, "Premcar has done all the mods I'd normally do to a 4x4 for outback touring – and they've done a better job than I would have. The Warrior is ready to do a lap of the country straight out of the box."

Being an older model, the D23 Navara is a little smaller than newer utes like the Ranger, Tasman and Terron 9, but it still offers good space and comfort for front occupants. The rear seat, however, is best suited to smaller passengers or shorter trips.

The 2.3-litre bi-turbo engine's 140kW and 450Nm are modest by class standards, but the Navara gets along without fuss, aided by the broad torque band provided by its twin-turbo setup. And the engine pairs well with the smooth-shifting seven-speed automatic.

The dashboard also reveals the Navara's age, with its smaller screen, dated design and limited feature set.

The fact that the Warrior performed so well against newer and larger competitors is a testament to the success of the Nissan-Premcar collaboration. Here's hoping that partnership continues, and we see a new Warrior model in the upcoming 2026 Navara line-up.

Regarding towing performance, Tim said of the Navara, "One of my favourite rigs off road also does well when hooked up – just don't expect to tow a massive load as its kerb weight (2298kg in auto) and low GCM (5910kg) means when you hook up its max tow capacity, you are left with only 112kg before you cap out on your GCM.

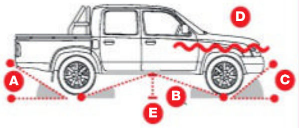
"That being said, the suspension is magic. Premcar's use of progressive-rate springs that stiffen as load is added has fixed the towing issues found in the regular Navara for a trailer like we had, with around 150kg of ball weight and 2000kg total weight."

4X4 UTE OF THE YEAR
2025
POWERED BY
REDARC
REDWORKS

NISSAN NAVARA PRO-4X WARRIOR	
PRICE	$71,634 +ORC
ENGINE	Inline 4-cylinder bi-turbo diesel
CAPACITY	2298cc
MAX POWER	140kW @ 3750rpm
MAX TORQUE	450Nm from 1500 to 2500rpm
TRANSMISSION	7-speed automatic
4X4 SYSTEM	Part-time 4x4 with high and low range
CONSTRUCTION	4-door ute on ladder chassis
FRONT SUSPENSION	Double-wishbone independent with coil springs
REAR SUSPENSION	Live axle with five-link coil-spring setup
TYRES	255/60R18 on alloy wheels
KERB WEIGHT	2289kg
GVM	3150kg
PAYLOAD	961kg
TOWING CAPACITY	3500kg
GCM	5910kg
SEATING CAPACITY	5
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	80L
ADR FUEL CONSUMPTION	7.5L/100km

NISSAN NAVARA PRO-4X WARRIOR

A DEPARTURE ANGLE	19.0°
B RAMPOVER ANGLE	26.2°
C APPROACH ANGLE	36.0°
D WADING DEPTH	600mm
E GROUND CLEARANCE	260mm



DAVE MORLEY

> “Premcar has done all the mods I’d normally do to a 4x4 for outback touring – and they’ve done a better job than I would have.”

NISSAN NAVARA PRO-4X WARRIOR

SCORE

37/50

WINNER BEST ADVENTURE UTE

WINNER – BEST HYBRID 4X4 UTE

Ford Ranger Sport Phev

$75,990 (+ORC)

We had three plug-in hybrid (PHEV) utes in this year's test – the first time we've ever included any in a 4x4 Ute Of The Year line-up. Each impressed us with its own unique strengths, but one stood out clearly from the pack: the Ford Ranger Sport PHEV.

What made the Ford stand out? Well, it drives like a Ranger, and that's a good thing in our books.

The Ranger PHEV isn't a bespoke design like some other EVs – it's built on the existing T6 platform that underpins the current Ranger range. It's this proven foundation, combined with Australian-developed and tuned suspension, that helps the Ranger stand out among the PHEVs and even some of the conventional ICE-powered utes.

Significantly, the Ranger PHEV is the only model in the line-up powered by a petrol engine. Under the bonnet is Ford's turbocharged 2.3-litre EcoBoost four-cylinder – the same unit VW offers in the Amarok, but one not available in any other Ranger variant.

In the PHEV, it's paired with a 75kW electric motor and an 11.8kWh battery. Together, the EcoBoost engine and e-motor produce a combined 207kW at 4600rpm and 697Nm at just 2500rpm. That actually betters the diesel V6 for torque, while the petrol engine is noticeably quieter and smoother than the Lion V6.

The hybrid powertrain is paired with Ford's familiar 10-speed automatic transmission and dual-range 4x4 transfer case, giving the PHEV the same on- and off-road performance as the ICE-only Ranger models.

All this with a claimed fuel consumption of just 2.7L/100km! It sounds almost too good to be true – but there are a few compromises with the PHEV Ranger.

Because the battery is mounted at the rear of the ute, the cargo tub differs from regular Ranger models and can't be removed. That means you can't get a PHEV as a cab-chassis or fit a service-body canopy to the back. The fuel tank is also smaller, down to 70 litres.

On the plus side, the hybrid system can power tools and appliances directly from the vehicle's battery.

In terms of towing, it was exactly what Tim expected from a Ranger. He said, "It felt planted, it felt safe. The tow-tech built in is still the best around but there is one catch – when you are underway the hybrid does little to offset fuel use as you are not harvesting energy unless braking. The net result is fuel use in the mid- to high-teens when testing – not ideal when the fuel tank is only 70 litres, yet it was by far and a way the best of the PHEVs for towing."

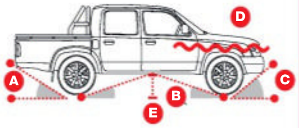
With its limited EV-only range, the Ford PHEV isn't the standout choice for pure electric driving, but as a solid 4x4 ute with a 3500kg towing capacity and strong payload, it's a winner – and that's why it took out our top spot as the best PHEV ute.

4X4 UTE OF THE YEAR
2025
POWERED BY
REDARC
REDWORKS

FORD RANGER PHEV SPORT	
PRICE	$75,990 +ORC
ENGINE	Turbo-petrol four with 75kW electric motor
CAPACITY	2.3L + 11.8kWh battery
MAX POWER	207kW (combined)
MAX TORQUE	697Nm (combined)
TRANSMISSION	10-speed automatic
4X4 SYSTEM	Selectable full-time 4x4, dual-range
CONSTRUCTION	4-door ute on ladder-frame chassis
FRONT SUSPENSION	Independent double wishbones, coil springs
REAR SUSPENSION	Live axle on leaf springs
TYRES	255/65R18 on alloy wheels
KERB WEIGHT	2566kg
GVM	3500kg
PAYLOAD	934kg
TOWING CAPACITY	3500kg (braked)
GCM	6580kg
SEATING CAPACITY	5
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	70L
ADR FUEL CONSUMPTION	2.9L/100km

FORD RANGER PHEV SPORT

A DEPARTURE ANGLE	24.7°
B RAMPOVER ANGLE	20.6°
C APPROACH ANGLE	30.1°
D WADING DEPTH	800mm
E GROUND CLEARANCE	228mm



MATT RAUDONIKIS

> Significantly, the Ranger PHEV is the only model in the line-up powered by a petrol engine. Under the bonnet is Ford's turbocharged 2.3-litre EcoBoost four-cylinder

FORD RANGER PHEV SPORT

SCORE

35.5/50

WINNER – BEST HYBRID 4X4 UTE

GWM Cannon Alpha Ultra PHEV

$67,990
(+ORC)

It was interesting to see that the GWM Cannon PHEV landed right behind the Ford Ranger PHEV in the overall scoring. In fact, it was a close pick between the two hybrids, and it only came down to the Ranger's simplicity and solid build to split them.

The Cannon Alpha is the big brother in the Cannon line-up, and in Ultra trim it comes fully loaded. It was the only ute in this test to offer front and rear locking differentials as standard, giving it unrivalled performance on the rougher tracks, while the cavernous cabin is packed with all the features you could ever need – and a few you didn't know you needed.

The Cannon scored well in the Breaking Ground and Doing the Job criteria, but fell behind in Bushability. This was due to some of the off-road functions being a bit complex, and the calibration of the ETC feeling a little jerky, meaning the big GWM needed its lockers to get over the offset wombat-hole obstacles smoothly. There's no doubt its hefty weight didn't help the Cannon's off-road performance.

The Cannon Ultra PHEV's driveline comprises a turbocharged 2.0-litre petrol engine and an electric motor that sits within the transmission bell-housing along with the torque converter. Combined, they deliver a claimed output of 300kW and 750Nm, which is fed to a dual-range, on-demand 4x4 system.

It's a powertrain that shrugs off the vehicle's weight and launches the GWM more like a cannonball than the cannon itself. The Ultra PHEV really gets up and moves off the mark.

When it came to towing, Tim said, "I loved the seats in the Alpha, and more points to the frankly obscene 300kW and 750Nm of power and torque, which make pulling away from the lights, trailer in-tow, like a drag race.

"But the Cannon fell to the mid-pack as a towing proposition as it's thirsty. I saw high teens, bordering on 20s per 100km travelled when towing."

Inside, the Nappa leather-covered seats are ventilated and heated front and rear, with a massage function on the front pews. The rear seats also have an electric slide and recline function that reduces the typically upright backrest angle found in most dual-cab utes.

A monster 14.6-inch infotainment screen sits in the centre of the dash and is both big and easy to see and use. It's home to all the usual system settings and controls, plus Apple CarPlay and Android Auto mirroring functions.

The cargo tub is also spacious, but in the PHEV model the spare tyre is moved in there, taking up some of that space. The barn-door/fold-down tailgate is a novel answer to a question nobody asked.

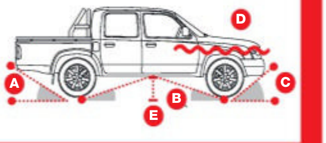
Novelties aside, GWM is a brand on the move in the 4x4 sphere, and with ongoing local development of its products, it will be one to watch in the coming years as it becomes a serious challenger to the established segment leaders.

4X4 UTE OF THE YEAR
2025
POWERED BY
REDARC
REDWORKS

GWM CANNON ALPHA ULTRA PHEV	
PRICE	$67,990 +ORC
ENGINE	4-cylinder petrol with electric motor
CAPACITY	2.0L
MAX POWER	300kW (combined)
MAX TORQUE	750Nm (combined)
TRANSMISSION	9-speed automatic
4X4 SYSTEM	On demand/dual range
CONSTRUCTION	4-door ute on ladder frame chassis
FRONT SUSPENSION	IFS, double wishbones, coil springs
REAR SUSPENSION	Live axle on leaf springs
TYRES	265/60R18 on alloy wheels
KERB WEIGHT	2810kg
GVM	3495kg
PAYLOAD	685kg
TOWING CAPACITY	3500kg (braked)
GCM	6745kg
SEATING CAPACITY	5
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	75L
ADR FUEL CONSUMPTION	1.7L/100km (combined hybrid)

GWM CANNON ALPHA ULTRA PHEV

A DEPARTURE ANGLE	23°
B RAMPOVER ANGLE	19°
C APPROACH ANGLE	28.5°
D WADING DEPTH	800mm
E GROUND CLEARANCE	210mm



MATT RAUDONIKIS

"The Cannon scored well in the Breaking Ground and Doing the Job criteria, but fell behind in Bushability. This was due to some of the off-road functions being a bit complex"

GWM CANNON ALPHA ULTRA PHEV

SCORE

33/50

Mitsubishi Triton GSR

$64,590 (+ORC)

The Mitsubishi Triton is one of the stalwarts of the midsize 4x4 ute segment, and the current generation is still one of the newer models on the market as it approaches two years since its launch.

The 2024 Triton brought new body styling, a bigger cargo tub and cabin, and an all-new interior that's certainly a big step up from its predecessor.

The new model gave Mitsubishi's 2.4-litre diesel engine a pair of turbochargers, along with improved injection and calibration, boosting outputs to 150kW and 470Nm. This gives the unladen Triton sprightly acceleration and performance, although you certainly hear it when you put your foot down.

In fact, the Triton is a fun ute to drive both on and off road. We often used to say about the monocoque Mitsubishi Pajeros that you could feel Mitsubishi's Dakar Rally experience in their chassis, and I found myself thinking the same again while driving the Triton on our Ute Of The Year loop.

On the gravel section, which threw up a variety of different surfaces and conditions, the Triton's suspension was one of the best sorted. It maintained its composure when pushed hard and gave the driver confidence and sure-footedness without compromising comfort.

Mitsubishi's Super Select 4x4 system is a big asset in such varied track conditions, giving the Triton excellent grip and acceleration on all surfaces, whether loose gravel or sealed roads.

Tim's thoughts on towing are positive: "Tip your hat to the engineers of the Mitsubishi Triton GSR for not limiting it too much in its GCM and for keeping its kerb weight down. With a max-tow-limit trailer (3500kg) behind it, the GSR still has more than 600kg of headway before it hits its 6250kg GCM. Without a trailer, she'll haul nearly 1100kg between the tub and cabin too – the GSR is a mighty prospect for towing.

"The rear leaf springs are well balanced for low loads and stiffen nicely with 150kg on the tow ball. It felt neutral and pleasant to ride along in, and its 2.4L diesel did well. The sequential nature of the bi-turbo set up means when towing, the smaller compressor is always fully spooled and the larger secondary turbo comes on at higher rpm and loads."

At $64,590, the GSR is the top-of-the-range model in the Triton line-up, but it's still cheaper than many other top-spec competitors. Even so, it comes with leather seats, powered front seats, roof vents for rear passengers, and a nine-inch multimedia screen positioned high on the dash where it's easy to see and use. While the screen is a step up for the Triton, it already looks small and a bit dated after spending time in newer models with their 12.3-inch units.

The Triton features large, tactile dials for volume and track selection, plus phone mirroring with wireless Apple CarPlay, Android Auto and inbuilt sat-nav. It's a functional and practical cabin, and the added space in the new model is certainly appreciated.

The Triton GSR was a driver favourite among our judges and scored several solid 8/10s, but it lost ground in the Breaking Ground category, which brought its overall average down.

4X4 UTE OF THE YEAR

2025

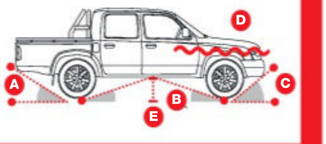
POWERED BY

REDARC REDWORKS

MITSUBISHI TRITON GSR	
PRICE	$64,590 +ORC
ENGINE	Inline 4-cylinder twin-turbo diesel
CAPACITY	2442cc
MAX POWER	150kW @ 3500rpm
MAX TORQUE	470Nm from 1500 to 2750rpm
TRANSMISSION	6-speed automatic
4X4 SYSTEM	Part-time dual-range 4x4 with full-time 4x4 mode
CONSTRUCTION	4-door double cab ute
FRONT SUSPENSION	Independent with wishbones and coils
REAR SUSPENSION	Live axle on leaf springs
TYRES	265/65R17 on alloy wheels
KERB WEIGHT	2105kg
GVM	3200kg
PAYLOAD	1095kg
TOWING CAPACITY	3500kg
GCM	6250kg
SEATING CAPACITY	5
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	75L (+17L AdBlue)
ADR FUEL CONSUMPTION	7.5L/100km

MITSUBISHI TRITON GSR

A DEPARTURE ANGLE	30.4°
B RAMPOVER ANGLE	23.4°
C APPROACH ANGLE	22.8°
D WADING DEPTH	N/A
E GROUND CLEARANCE	228mm



TIM VAN DUYL

> "Tip your hat to the engineers of the Mitsubishi Triton GSR for not limiting it too much in its GCM and for keeping its kerb weight down."

MITSUBISHI TRITON GSR

SCORE

32.5/50

WINNER – BEST 4X4 <$50K

KGM Musso Ultimate

$51,550 DRIVEAWAY

There's been a name change from SsangYong to KGM, but really there hasn't been any other major change to the venerable Musso, which has long been one of our value-for-money favourites.

The value package continues with the Musso, which picked up our gong for Best New Ute Under $50,000. Now, before you jump in to point out that the Musso Ultimate costs more than $50K, that figure refers to the drive-away price as quoted by KGM. Most of our pricing is based on MLRP (Manufacturer's List Recommended Price), which doesn't include on-road costs. If you remove those from the drive-away price, the Musso Ultimate slips comfortably under the $50K mark.

Whatever way you look at it, the Musso remains a great value-for-money package. It's one of the larger utes in its class, with a wide, well-appointed cabin featuring black highlights, leather-look seat trim, 8-way powered, heated and ventilated front seats, heated rear outer seats, a 3D 360° camera, dual 12.3-inch multimedia and driver info screens, powered sunroof and TPMS – all part of a comprehensive package.

KGM's 2.2-litre single-turbo diesel engine produces a claimed 133kW at 4000rpm and 400Nm of torque, which is enough to get the ute along briskly – though it's no race car.

It also helps the Musso haul a load, and the numbers are impressive. With a GCM of 6480kg and a modest kerb weight of 2200kg, it can tow its full 3500kg limit while still having around 750kg of GCM capacity remaining.

That said, Tim noted after towing, "The 2000kg trailer put a lot of strain on the 133kW 2.2L diesel – so much so, I could smell it was getting a bit hot, so I took it easy. Maybe it was taking it easy that did it, but the Musso was one of the most efficient for fuel use when towing. I saw around 12L/100km on our loop."

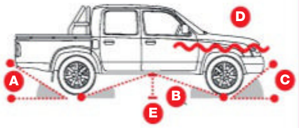
For an older ute, the KGM Musso remains a solid package, and when it comes to value for money in the fully equipped Ultimate specification, it's hard to ignore.

4X4 UTE OF THE YEAR
2025
POWERED BY
REDARC
REDWORKS

KGM MUSSO ULTIMATE	
PRICE	$51,550 driveaway
ENGINE	I4 turbo-diesel
CAPACITY	2157cc
MAX POWER	133kW @ 4000rpm
MAX TORQUE	400Nm @ 1400–2800rpm
TRANSMISSION	6-speed automatic
4X4 SYSTEM	Part-time 4x4 with high and low range
CONSTRUCTION	4-door ute on ladder chassis
FRONT SUSPENSION	Double-wishbone IFS with coil springs
REAR SUSPENSION	Live axle located by 5-link with coil springs
TYRES	255/60R18 on alloy wheels
KERB WEIGHT	2090kg
GVM	2880kg
PAYLOAD	1010kg
TOWING CAPACITY	3500kg
GCM	6380kg
SEATING CAPACITY	5
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	75L
ADR FUEL CONSUMPTION	8.6L/100km

KGM MUSSO ULTIMATE

A DEPARTURE ANGLE	23.4°
B RAMPOVER ANGLE	23°
C APPROACH ANGLE	22.8°
D WADING DEPTH	570mm
E GROUND CLEARANCE	215mm



MATT RAUDONIKIS

"For an older ute, the Musso remains a solid package, and when it comes to value for money in the fully equipped Ultimate specification, it's hard to ignore"

KGM MUSSO ULTIMATE

SCORE

31.5/50

WINNER – BEST 4X4 <$50K

Isuzu D-Max X-Terrain

$73,000 (+ORC)

The Isuzu D-MAX is fast becoming one of the older utes in the category, but that brings benefits – it remains a relatively simple vehicle. The current generation is four years old and received a significant refresh two years ago to keep it as up to date as possible.

Sure, this top-of-the-range X-Terrain model is loaded with features and trim, and the lane departure system still manages to annoy even after being revised, but under the skin it remains a solid, working-class ute.

The 3.0-litre diesel engine is old-school and one of the largest-capacity units in the class. Its claimed 140kW/450Nm outputs may be modest, but it gets the job done for touring and remains a favourite among those who tow.

The 2024 updates brought a fresh look to the front end and an increased level of safety kit. The full suite of ADAS and safety systems in the D-MAX now includes eight airbags – dual front, dual seat side, dual full-length curtain, front knee and centre – plus AEB with Turn Assist, Forward Collision Warning, updated Adaptive Cruise Control, Speed Limiter, Mis-acceleration Mitigation, Driver Attention Assist, Traffic Sign Recognition, Lane Departure Warning, Lane Departure Prevention, updated Lane Keeping Assist, Emergency Lane Keeping, Blind Spot Monitoring, Rear Cross Traffic Alert, Trailer Sway Control, Rear Cross Traffic Brake, and a digital reversing camera.

The updates also added a Rough Terrain button to the console, which sharpens the electronic traction control for off-road use – but it feels a bit like a gimmick. It works, but we wonder why the ETC wouldn't always operate that way. As it stands now, you need to press the button once you're in low-range 4x4 if you want to tackle any challenging terrain.

Tim is more of a fan of the Isuzu, saying, "The D-MAX has been a favourite of mine for towing for years, and although well beaten by the Ranger V6, it remains a worthy contender and runner-up as best tow ute.

"The 4JJ engine has what you want for towing – low-down torque – and it's efficient, with my testing showing around 13L/100km over our loop. The gearbox is an Aisin six-speed that, again, is simple and reliable. The X-Terrain uses the softer of the leaf-pack options in the D-MAX, and it rides well with a load on the tow ball."

The softer leaf pack was also appreciated on the unsealed section of the road loop, where it dealt with bumps and holes better than some of the stiffer utes, although it still wasn't as composed as the Ranger, Triton, Navara or Tasman.

At $73K, the X-Terrain isn't cheap, and while the cost is reflected in its level of interior trim and features, it still fell short in the Value for Money equation. With the same driveline, chassis and suspension, the best value in the D-MAX range is found in the lower grades.

4X4 UTE OF THE YEAR

2025

POWERED BY

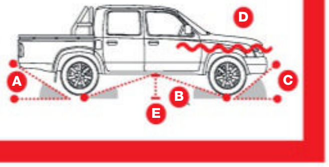
REDARC

REDWORKS

ISUZU D-MAX X-TERRAIN	
PRICE	$73,000 +ORC
ENGINE	I4 diesel
CAPACITY	2999cc
MAX POWER	140kW @ 3600rpm
MAX TORQUE	450Nm from 1600 to 2000rpm
TRANSMISSION	6-speed automatic
4X4 SYSTEM	Part-time, dual range 4x4
CONSTRUCTION	4-door ute on ladder chassis
FRONT SUSPENSION	IFS with upper and lower arms and coil springs
REAR SUSPENSION	Live axle on leaf springs
TYRES	265/50R20
KERB WEIGHT	2170kg
GVM	3100kg
PAYLOAD	930kg
TOWING CAPACITY	3500kg
GCM	6000kg
SEATING CAPACITY	5
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	80L
ADR FUEL CONSUMPTION	8.3L/100km

ISUZU D-MAX X-TERRAIN

A DEPARTURE ANGLE	26.4°
B RAMPOVER ANGLE	23.1°
C APPROACH ANGLE	29.2°
D WADING DEPTH	800mm
E GROUND CLEARANCE	235mm



TIM VAN DUYL

> "The D-MAX has been a favourite of mine for towing for years, and although well beaten by the Ranger V6, it remains a worthy contender and runner-up as best tow ute."

ISUZU D-MAX X-TERRAIN

SCORE

30.5/50

BYD Shark 6

$57,900
(+ORC)

The BYD Shark bit into the Australian ute market like its namesake tears into a school of baitfish. It entered aggressively with sharp driveaway pricing, a high level of specification, and the claim of being the first 4x4 PHEV ute on sale in Australia.

The tactics worked, with strong sales putting the Shark 6 among the best-selling utes in its class and boosting the BYD brand towards its top-five target.

The Shark is a large midsize ute with a spacious, well-appointed cabin in the single grade offered for now. Its interior sets a high benchmark for other utes to follow, and potential buyers are likely to be impressed by its features, space and style – not to mention the price – when test driving one.

The Shark is driven by a pair of electric motors – one on each axle – plus a petrol engine that can operate the front wheels when required, although its primary function is to charge the batteries that power the electric motors.

The petrol engine is a 135kW/260Nm turbocharged 1.5-litre four-cylinder mounted longitudinally at the front, alongside a 130kW/330Nm electric motor. The rear wheels are powered by a separate 150kW/340Nm electric motor that's completely isolated from the front. It comes into play when extra traction or maximum performance is required.

That's a combined 321kW and 650Nm, but it falls short in how that output is delivered to the wheels.

The BYD doesn't use a conventional dual-range 4x4 driveline. As mentioned, the rear axle is mechanically isolated from the front – there are no driveshafts or transfer case linking it to the petrol engine. The rear electric motor only comes into play when required, either by flooring the throttle or when wheel slip signals a need for all-wheel drive.

It's this disconnection between the front and rear, and the time it takes for the system to react, that kills the Shark's performance off-road and on gravel tracks. It isn't helped by the fully independent suspension, which uses relativley short control arms, limiting wheel travel and causing it to lift wheels easily in rough terrain.

Using the Shark's terrain modes does sharpen the system's response, but not enough to compensate for the fundamental shortcomings in its mechanical design and configuration.

The limitations of the setup were also noted by Tim when he hitched the Offline camper behind the Shark.

"It is nice to see a Tow Mode in the Shark, but if the battery is running at less than 50 per cent, the petrol engine will rev so hard that will drive you nuts on a long haul," Tim said.

"Once charged beyond 50 per cent it will settle down unless you are pushing it, and with 2000kg you are almost at its tow-limit of 2500kg, which for me rules it out of contention instantly. The Shark doesn't have the payload or tow capacity to compete as a viable towing ute."

It might not shine as a bush ute or towing rig, but as a town car for light duties, the Shark is a ripper. It's quick, comfortable and packed with gear and gadgets. But this is *4X4 Australia*, and a 4x4 ute needs to have strong off-road capability, carry a decent load and haul a trailer with confidence.

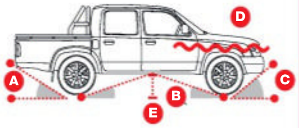
BYD is already talking about fitting a larger-capacity petrol engine in the Shark, and we hope it helps address some of the model's shortcomings.

4X4 UTE OF THE YEAR
2025
POWERED BY
REDARC
REDWORKS

BYD SHARK 6	
PRICE	$57,000 +ORC
ENGINE	PHEV; turbocharged petrol engine with dual electric motors
CAPACITY	1497cc
MAX POWER	(ICE) 135kW / (EV) 130kW front, 150kW rear
MAX TORQUE	(ICE) 260Nm / (EV) 310Nm front, 340Nm rear
TRANSMISSION	N/A
4X4 SYSTEM	Individual electric drive front and rear (no mechanical linkage)
CONSTRUCTION	4-door ute on ladder chassis
FRONT SUSPENSION	Double wishbone independent with coils
REAR SUSPENSION	Double wishbone independent with coils
TYRES	265/65R18
KERB WEIGHT	2710kg
GVM	3500kg
PAYLOAD	790kg
TOWING CAPACITY	2500kg
GCM	5750kg
SEATING CAPACITY	5
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	60L
ADR FUEL CONSUMPTION	2.0L/100km

BYD SHARK 6

A DEPARTURE ANGLE	19.3°
B RAMPOVER ANGLE	17°
C APPROACH ANGLE	19.3°
D WADING DEPTH	700mm
E GROUND CLEARANCE	230mm



MATT RAUDONIKIS

"It might not shine as a bush ute or towing rig, but as a town car for light duties, the Shark is a ripper. It's quick, comfortable and packed with gear and gadgets"

BYD SHARK 6

SCORE

30.5/50

Mazda BT-50 GT

$62,660
(+ORC)

The Mazda BT-50 is essentially an Isuzu D-Max wearing a sharp suit. The two share the same Isuzu engine, driveline, platform and systems, but differ in exterior and interior styling, along with some subtle changes to suspension tuning.

If you're going to partner with another manufacturer to add a ute to your showroom, then teaming up with Isuzu isn't a bad choice.

The result is that the BT-50 GT – the second-highest model in the BT-50 range – shares the 3.0-litre diesel engine, six-speed automatic transmission, chassis and underlying architecture with Isuzu. It even gets Isuzu's Rough Terrain button.

While the engine and transmission feel the same as in the D-Max, it seems Mazda has calibrated its suspension tune to deliver a slightly sportier dynamic without sacrificing passenger comfort. The difference is minor, and you'd only really notice it when driving the two vehicles back-to-back.

Inside and out, the Mazda's styling is more subdued and less angular than that of the Isuzu, but the level of equipment is the same and functionality is similar. My personal preference is for the Mazda, both inside and out, but if I were buying one or the other it would come down to whichever dealer could offer the best price.

Tim noted the different weight capacities between the two vehicles on test and how this could also influence your choice between them.

"I made sure to tow with the GT back-to-back with the D-Max X-Terrain, because although they share their chassis, gearbox and engine, the GT runs stiffer, more load-oriented rear springs.

"The GT has a payload of up to 998kg, bettering the X-Terrain by about 70kg, but I'll be honest – I think you need to use some of that capability and run some weight in the tub of the GT, as it felt a lot stiffer and less settled than the Isuzu.

"If you're expecting to run a few hundred kilos of canopy and gear, the GT might be the one to go for; just keep an eye on your GVM (3100kg) and GCM (6000kg)."

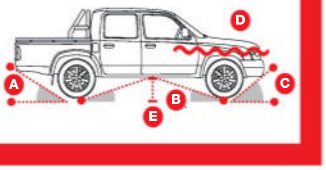
Choosing between the Mazda and Isuzu ute really comes down to personal preference, what you plan to use it for and the deal you can screw out of the salesman. The fact that the Shark snuck between the two in our ranking was simply due to the differing preferences of our judges.

4X4 UTE OF THE YEAR
2025
POWERED BY
REDARC
REDWORKS

MAZDA BT-50 GT	
PRICE	$62,660 +ORC
ENGINE	I4 turbo-diesel
CAPACITY	2999cc
MAX POWER	140kW
MAX TORQUE	450Nm
TRANSMISSION	6-speed automatic
4X4 SYSTEM	Part-time, dual range 4x4
CONSTRUCTION	4-door ute on ladder chassis
FRONT SUSPENSION	IFS with upper and lower arms and coil springs
REAR SUSPENSION	Live axle on leaf springs
TYRES	265/60R18
KERB WEIGHT	2102kg
GVM	3100kg
PAYLOAD	998kg
TOWING CAPACITY	3500kg
GCM	6000kg
SEATING CAPACITY	5
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	76L
ADR FUEL CONSUMPTION	7.1L/100km

MAZDA BT-50 GT

A DEPARTURE ANGLE	17.9°
B RAMPOVER ANGLE	23.8°
C APPROACH ANGLE	30.4°
D WADING DEPTH	800mm
E GROUND CLEARANCE	240mm



MATT RAUDONIKIS

"If you're going to partner with another manufacturer to add a ute to your showroom, then teaming up with Isuzu isn't a bad choice."

MAZDA BT-50 GT

SCORE

29.5/50

LDV Terron 9 Origin

$53,674
(+ORC)

LDV is another manufacturer from China, but one that has been here for a while, mainly selling in the commercial van segment.

LDV's Terron 9 4x4 ute launched only weeks before our testing, and after initially being impressed by its performance on a controlled test track, we were keen to get it on board and learn more about how it performs in the wild on familiar bush tracks.

First thing about the LDV is that it's one of the cheapest utes in the Dirty Dozen, retailing for $53K from LDV dealers. That price is for the Terron 9 Origin model we have here, but by the time you're reading this there will also be a Terron 9 Evolve model on sale at $58,937. We would have loved to have had the Evolve on this test, with its addition of a front locker and higher-grade features, but none were available at the time.

The Terron 9 Origin sits at the larger end of the midsize ute segment, and that's something we think will appeal to many buyers. Inside and out, it's a bigger vehicle than most of the others in this test.

The size is particularly noticeable in the back seat, thanks to the fact that the LDV doesn't have a rear bulkhead panel like the other utes. The body side mouldings are a single piece on each side, running from the A-pillars all the way to the tailgate.

This design is said to give extra length to the passenger cab as well as increase the overall strength of the bodyshell. A downside for many potential buyers is that it prevents you from easily removing the cargo tub and replacing it with a tray or service body.

The LDV impressed with its size and interior space, but finding basic controls in the cabin was far harder than it should be thanks to the odd and sometimes illogical placement of buttons. Even selecting four-wheel drive was unnecessarily complicated, yet it was needed to climb the rocky slope. Where all the other vehicles managed the hill in high range, the LDV's traction control reacted so slowly that it simply couldn't go straight up with them.

The buttons for 4x4 low range and the rear diff lock are prominent and easy to see, but if you want to select high-range 4x4 you need to dive into the multimedia screen menus to find it. Why it isn't grouped with the other 4x4 controls is anyone's guess.

Likewise, turning off the parking lights at night requires another trip into the multimedia screen menus, even though there's a multi-position headlight switch on the column stalk – which is exactly where this function should be.

These were just a couple of examples of things being confusing in this vehicle – and there were others.

On the road loop, the LDV performed well, with a nice suspension calibration that isn't too harsh when unladen and plenty of punch from the 2.0-litre single-turbo diesel engine. In fact, with a claimed 520Nm on tap, it has the most torque of any four-cylinder ute in this class, and it doesn't suffer from lag as much as you might expect.

Tim the Tow Man was also impressed by its stability and performance when the Offline Camper was hooked up behind the Terron 9.

"The Terron 9 was probably the surprise package when it came to towing. On test it was the most fuel efficient, with high 11s to low 12L/100km seen on our loop, and although traction-limited when unhitched, it felt stable and secure when loaded with 150kg of ball weight.

"It kills it on paper with a high GCM of 6500kg which, after you take off its hefty 2400kg kerb weight, means you still have headway for carting gear when towing at the full 3500kg.

"The 163kW comes on hard and high in the rev range, making the driveline feel like it is working harder than larger-displacement engines.

"It's a compelling package though – dirt cheap, powerful, and with good numbers on paper. It scored mid-pack for towing, just shy of the top five."

98.0kPa
294.6m
6.4°
4.2°
Expert View
Current Vehicle Status
Off Road History
Rock
25°
28°
23°
Wade Sensing
ESC OFF
Crawl Control Off-Road
Hill Descent Control

4X4 UTE OF THE YEAR

2025

POWERED BY

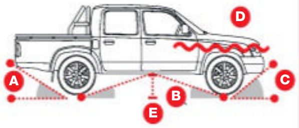
REDARC

REDWORKS

LDV TERRON 9 ORIGIN	
PRICE	$53,990
ENGINE	I4 turbo-diesel
CAPACITY	2499cc
MAX POWER	163kW @ 3800rpm
MAX TORQUE	520Nm from 1500 to 2500rpm
TRANSMISSION	8-speed automatic
4X4 SYSTEM	Part-time, dual range 4x4
CONSTRUCTION	4-door cabin on ladder chassis
FRONT SUSPENSION	IFS with coils
REAR SUSPENSION	Live axle on monoleaf springs
TYRES	265/65R18 on alloy wheels
KERB WEIGHT	2495kg
GVM	3500kg
PAYLOAD	1005kg
TOWING CAPACITY	3500kg
GCM	6500kg
SEATING CAPACITY	5
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	80L
ADR FUEL CONSUMPTION	7.9L/100km

LDV TERRON 9 ORIGIN

A DEPARTURE ANGLE	25°
B RAMPOVER ANGLE	20°
C APPROACH ANGLE	25°
D WADING DEPTH	550mm
E GROUND CLEARANCE	220mm



MATT RAUDONIKIS

"The Terron 9 Origin sits at the larger end of the midsize ute segment, and that's something we think will appeal to many buyers"

LDV TERRON 9 ORIGIN

SCORE

15.5/50

SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS

Offline Campers

The Offline Campers Solitaire 14 might look flash, but it's built for real-world touring – where dust gets everywhere and the nearest tap is 200km away.

Designed and built in Adelaide by Sam Reynolds and his small team, every chassis, panel and wire is handled in-house. It's the kind of operation that still believes in doing things properly: strong, simple and ready for abuse.

We chose the Solitaire 14 as our test trailer for *4X4 Australia's* Ute of the Year because it represents what many of you actually tow. At roughly 2000kg with a 150kg ball weight, it's well under the 3.5-tonne brag limit, but right on the money for a serious off-road tourer. Heavy enough to expose a ute's weak spots, yet light enough to mirror a proper trip into the Flinders or High Country – not a highway dash to a caravan park.

The Solitaire is cleverly engineered and easy to live with, yet adds space, storage and a proper ensuite for longer runs.

In a field full of badge-engineered hybrid campers, this one's the real deal – Aussie-built, trail-tested and tough as they come.

You can check them out at offlinecampers.com.au

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SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS

4X4 UTE OF THE YEAR 2025

POWERED BY REDARC REDWORKS

When you look at the custom 4x4s we feature in *4X4 Australia* magazine, there's one brand name that appears in nearly every custom build: REDARC – the go-to choice for auxiliary power systems in just about any 4x4.

We are proud to have this great Australian brand along on our 4X4 Ute Of The Year test to help with proceedings and to show us its new REDWorks platform.

The benchmark for genuine capability testing, 4X4 Ute Of The Year is one of the toughest and most authentic proving grounds in the industry. That mindset mirrors how REDARC has engineered its products for more than four decades: gear built to handle the extreme, tested in state-of-the-art in-house facilities.

This shared belief – creating equipment that stands up to real use, in real conditions, for people who expect the best – made the REDARC naming-rights partnership a natural fit.

As part of this partnership, REDARC is supporting the industry's most trusted voice both on the ground and behind the wheel, contributing technical insight to adjudication discussions.

"Nobody designs, engineers, builds, tests or uses gear like we do," said Taylor Boyley, REDARC Marketing Manager ANZ. "REDARC has long prided itself on our customer-first philosophy, so helping Australians choose the most capable, dependable and practical off-road Utes for their adventures was a natural fit."

This test also showcases the arrival of REDWorks, REDARC's new Australia-made, plug-and-play power panels.

These power panels streamline vehicle power by taking the hassle out of choosing components and building a system from scratch. Pre-wired, pre-fused and ready to install, REDARC's new REDWorks panels do the designing, wiring and testing for you in one compact, integrated and ready-to-install panel.

Designed to charge, control and distribute power through your vehicle, with a REDWorks panel on board you can power fridges, lights, compressors, tools and more through pre-wired genuine Anderson outputs.

REDWorks manages the power between your start and secondary

batteries. While driving, REDWorks charges your secondary battery from your alternator, but when the sun is out, the inbuilt MPPT solar regulator means you can take advantage of free power from the sun. Thanks to Green Power Priority, REDWorks will automatically prioritise solar first to reduce strain on your alternator.

Compatible with AGM, lead-acid and lithium (LiFePO4) batteries, including heated lithium, REDWorks will isolate your start battery once you get to camp to protect it from discharge while your auxiliary battery powers your accessories.

Available in three separate models – Scout, Nomad and Pioneer – there's a REDWorks power panel for every adventure.

Designed to charge, control and distribute power through your vehicle, with a REDWorks panel on board you can power fridges, lights, compressors, tools and more through pre-wired genuine Anderson outputs

4X4 UTE OF THE YEAR
2025
POWERED BY
REDARC
REDWORKS
THE POWER OF REDARC
REDARC

If it's a powerhouse on wheels that you're after, the flagship Pioneer is your answer

Perfect for powering a fridge, lights and charging your phone and camera, the Scout is the choice for minimalist touring setups or those diving into 12V for the first time. At the size of an A4 sheet, it fits neatly under a seat, behind drawers or tucked into a canopy.

If you want to charge more gear and power more accessories, Nomad takes things to the next level. With an integrated fuse block, Nomad grows with your rig, allowing you to easily expand your off-grid set-up without any drastic re-wiring. Available in both 25A and 50A variants, Nomad is ready to handle bigger loads all while keeping things plug-and-play.

If it's a powerhouse on wheels that you're after, the flagship Pioneer is your answer. Featuring a 50A DC to DC charger, Pioneer combines high-output charging and RedVision monitoring to deliver a system that puts you in charge. Monitor battery health, water tanks and system performance, all while controlling your devices like lights, fridges and pumps through the RedVision App or Display. It delivers expedition-grade convenience in a standard 4x4 setup, without the complexity or cost.

All REDWorks 50A varieties are even EV and hybrid-ready thanks to configurable input current limits. These panels also look after your start battery thanks to their Start Battery Charging and Start Battery Recovery features – so no more jumper leads.

Built for vehicles facing the same harsh conditions that define 4X4 Ute Of The Year, REDWorks gives you the power to escape the everyday, to make anywhere home, to explore without limits.

Head to www.redarcelectronics.com/au/redworks for more information.

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4X4 UTE OF THE YEAR

2025

The Scores

	BYD Shark 6	GWM Cannon Alpha	Ford Ranger PHEV	Isuzu D-Max X-Terrain	KGM Musso Ultimate	Kia Tasman X-Pro
VALUE FOR MONEY	7	6	6	6	8	7
BREAKING NEW GROUND	8	8	8	5	4	7
BUILT TOUGH	5	6	9	6	6	8
DOING THE JOB	5	7	7	7	7	9
BUSHABILITY	4	5	6	7	5	7
TOTAL	**29**	**32**	**36**	**31**	**30**	**38**

WINNER –
BEST 4X4
<$50K

	Mazda BT-50 GT	Mitsubishi Triton GSR	Nissan Navara Warrior	Ford Ranger Sport V6	LDV Terron 9 Origin	Toyota Hilux SR5+
VALUE FOR MONEY	6	7	8	7	4	9
BREAKING NEW GROUND	5	4	5	8	3	2
BUILT TOUGH	6	8	8	8	2	9
DOING THE JOB	7	8	6	9	2	9
BUSHABILITY	7	8	9	8	1	10
TOTAL	**31**	**35**	**36**	**40**	**12**	**39**

WINNER UTE OF THE YEAR OVERALL
WINNER BEST HYBRID 4X4 UTE
WINNER BEST ADVENTURE UTE

When the team at Ford Australia first told us about its upcoming Ranger Super Duty, my initial reaction was that it sounded like an answer to a question nobody had asked. As it turns out, I couldn't have been more wrong – because Ford had been asking the question all along.

Around seven years ago – before the current-generation Ranger had even been revealed – a group of senior Ford Australia managers and engineers hit the road to speak directly with private and business owners of four-wheel-drive utes. They wanted to understand how people were actually using their vehicles and, more importantly, what they wanted from them. What would be on the wish list for the ideal working 4x4 ute?

This survey wasn't limited to owners of midsize utes like the Ranger. It also included managers of heavy-duty ute fleets – such as LandCruiser 79 Series operators – as well as those running full-size US-made pick-up trucks.

What they discovered aligns closely with what we hear at *4X4 Australia*: the number-one issue is weight. Whether it's a ute loaded to the hilt on a mine site or cattle station, or hauling a big caravan along the highway, most vehicles simply aren't up to the task in standard form.

The only real alternatives have been the heavy-duty US pick-ups – but many buyers don't want something that large.

WORDS MATT RAUDONIKIS

REPORTING FOR DUTY

A whopping 4500kg GVM, 4500kg towing capacity and 8000kg GCM – here's our first drive of Ford's new Super Duty Ranger

And while those trucks can tow massive trailers, a lot of them have relatively low payloads and aren't built for the punishing conditions of Australia's outback tracks.

Sure, you can get an aftermarket GVM upgrade, but many buyers don't want the added cost, complexity or uncertainty that comes with going down that path – especially the big fleet managers overseeing dozens, sometimes hundreds, of vehicles.

They were tired of buying a brand-new ute, only to then send it to a third party for a GVM upgrade and modifications, and later having to juggle multiple providers for servicing, repairs and maintenance depending on which components needed attention.

What they really wanted was a ute with higher load and towing capacities from the factory, and the ability to kit it out using manufacturer-approved suppliers. In short, a one-stop shop for a do-it-all vehicle, whether it's destined for work or play.

THE PLAN

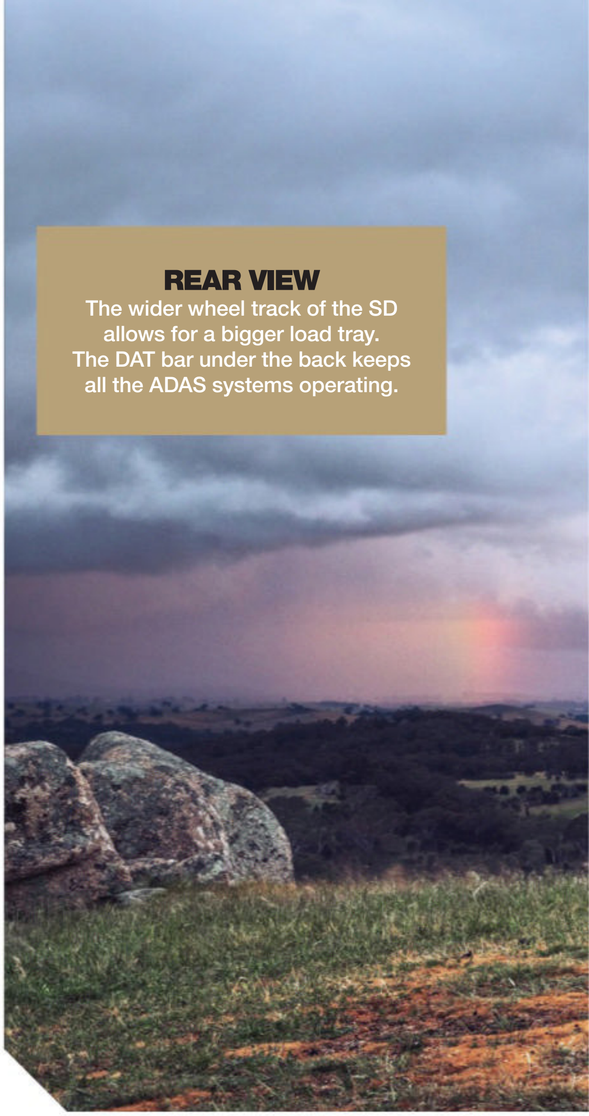
The Ford team travelled across large parts of Australia talking to as many ute owners as possible, and returned to Melbourne with a solution.

The first step was to build a business plan for what they wanted, based on the feedback gathered on the trip, then get approval from the brass in Dearborn to put the plan into action.

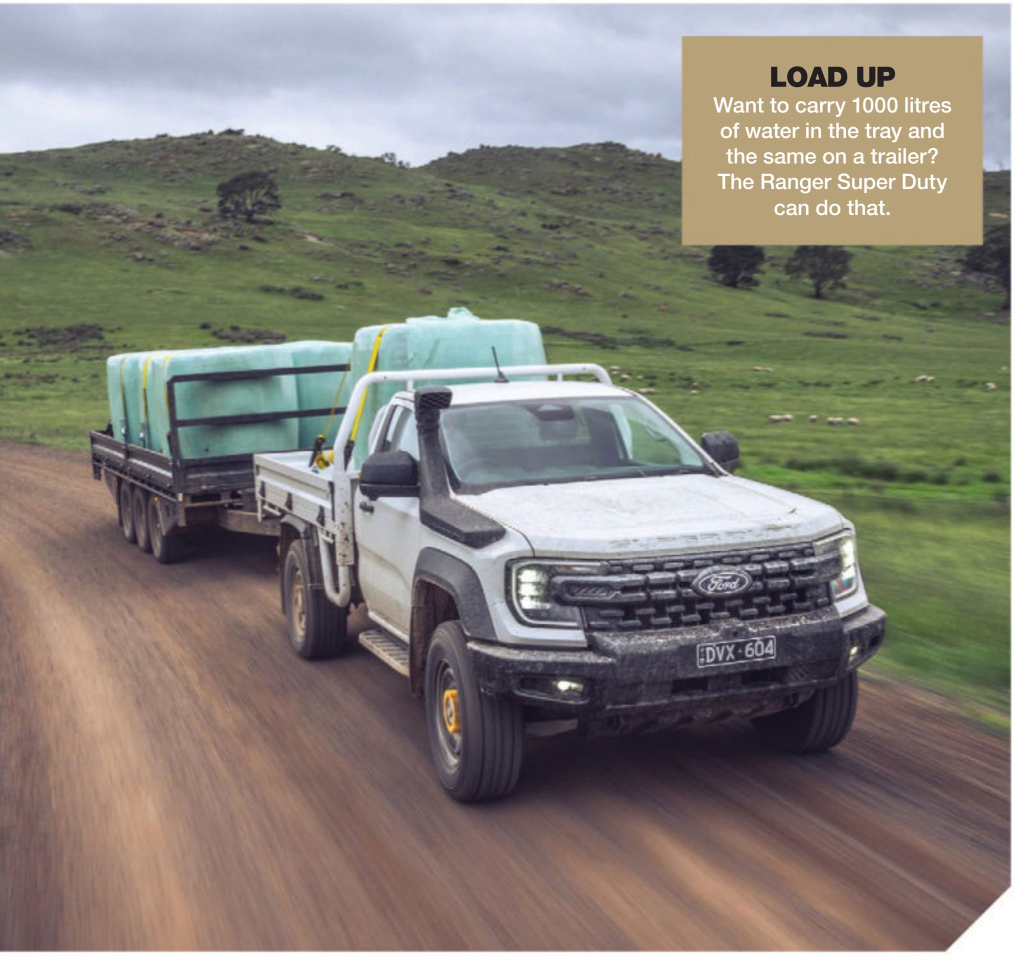
What the team wanted was a Ranger Super Duty – a nameplate only ever applied to the heavy-duty versions of the iconic Ford F-trucks. We're talking F-250 and above here, and the Super Duty name had never been applied to a midsize truck.

Super Duty is not a title that Dearborn hands out willy-nilly like so many sticker-pack specials we're used to in the midsize 4x4 ute segment. No, Super Duty has to be earned, and there are standards that must be met before a Ford truck can wear that badge of honour. In fact, you can't even buy a Super Duty badge – the mark is stamped into the vehicle's sheetmetal, across the hood (I mean bonnet) and across the tailgate. You can't just walk into a parts store and buy a Ford Super Duty badge to stick on any old ute.

The Australian team was convincing and, after outlining their plan, soon got the tick of approval to proceed with the project. That was just the first hurdle – the next was how to implement it.



REAR VIEW
The wider wheel track of the SD allows for a bigger load tray. The DAT bar under the back keeps all the ADAS systems operating.



LOAD UP
Want to carry 1000 litres of water in the tray and the same on a trailer? The Ranger Super Duty can do that.

THE ESSENTIALS

Ford Australia's plan was to create a Ranger – still the P703 model and still on the T6 platform – but one capable of a 4500kg GVM, towing a trailer of the same weight, and achieving a legal 8000kg GCM.

This would give users a vehicle no larger than a standard Ranger, with all the usual features and conveniences, yet offering the towing capacity of full-size trucks and a payload to out-haul them.

It was a big ask, but globally Ford has a deep pool of talented engineers and proven products to draw from.

While the stamping says Super Duty, the core of the product is a heavy-duty 4x4 truck. That meant engineering a chassis, suspension and driveline that could handle the target capacities in the harshest, most remote conditions.

The T6 platform is retained, but the chassis is now thicker and heavier-duty to support the increased loads. Ford tells us that only six per cent of the chassis is carried over from a regular Ranger – and even then, it's limited to some

It's a huge diff and worth checking out under the back of the Super Duty – same for the strengthened front suspension hardware

RANGER SUPER DUTY
DPF·315

mounting brackets.

Midway down the chassis is a 130-litre fuel tank with its own crossmember for support and a heavy-duty bash plate underneath for protection. In fact, all underbody components are well protected by metal plates, while the increased ride height keeps them further off the ground.

The Super Duty chassis is so different that popular accessories such as bullbars and side steps from a standard Ranger will not fit; they must be specifically designed and engineered for the Super Duty.

For axles, the team delved into the Ford parts bin, but even these production components have been re-engineered to meet the demands of the Super Duty.

The front differential is derived from a Ford Bronco Raptor but has been beefed up with heavier-duty half-shafts, CV joints, strengthened gears and other internal components. The Super Duty Ranger also gains a locking front differential for off-road performance. The front hubs were adapted from the F-250 and, significantly, use an eight-stud bolt pattern.

The Ford team says the eight-stud wheels were required because it was the only way to achieve the clamping force needed to secure the wheel at the loads the vehicle is designed for.

The front suspension features Super Duty-specific upper and lower aluminium cast control arms and uprights, all rated to handle SD loads.

As for the rear axle, it shares the same stud pattern but is derived from a Ford Transit Jumbo rear-end. Again, it has been beefed up with strengthened gears, larger axles and the heavy-duty components needed to cope with an 8000kg GCM, and it has been converted to a full-floating design. It's a huge diff and worth checking out by sticking your head under the back of the Super Duty – the same goes for the strengthened front suspension hardware.

The transfer case in the Ranger SD is another upgraded component, and significantly it offers only 4x4 Auto and locked high- and low-range modes, with no 2WD setting. Ford says that with the loads the SD is engineered to carry, the AWD-style 4x4 Auto mode is the best and safest option for users.

The Super Duty has a wider wheel track than a regular Ranger, matching that of the Ranger Raptor.

The wheelbase is unchanged, but the rear leaf-spring mounts have been shifted to accommodate longer leaf packs, providing increased wheel travel. All suspension and chassis mounts have been reinforced to cope with the expected loads of the Super Duty.

Steel 18-inch wheels are fitted to the standard Super Duty, with Super Duty-branded alloy wheels to come when the XLT model launches in mid-2026. The move to 18-inch wheels was necessary to accommodate a larger disc-brake package to meet SD requirements.

The tyres fitted to the Ranger SD are LT275/70R18 (33-inch) General Grabber all-terrains, again rated to handle heavier loads. The front wheel arches, and the rear arches on the XLT with a tub, have been designed to provide additional clearance for the taller tyres and longer wheel travel.

POWERTRAIN

The capacities of the Ranger Super Duty put it in the N2 vehicle class, which required changes to the 3.0-litre V6 diesel engine we're used to in the Ranger. The recalibration reduces peak power from 165kW to 154kW but retains the 600Nm peak torque figure.

The cooling system has been upgraded with the 8000kg GCM in mind, including a 1000W electric fan with 25 per cent more capacity than the regular Ranger V6 unit. The Super Duty radiator grille has also been designed to allow greater airflow through to the fan.

The Super Duty comes with a model-specific intake snorkel, developed and manufactured by Safari to suit the new sheetmetal and feed air to the V6. Combined with the increased ride height, it gives the Super Duty a higher wading depth of 850mm.

Helping further are raised breathers for all driveline components, tucked high on the chassis to vent heat and prevent water ingress.

The N2 category also requires the engine to run AdBlue, which has now been incorporated into the Super Duty.

Another insight from the Ford team's customer road trip was that many users didn't want the DPF to perform automatic regenerations, as the increased heat can easily start fires in dry grass or paddocks. As a result, DPF regen can now be postponed and controlled manually via a button, with a dash warning advising when a regen is required.

> Eight-stud wheels were required to achieve the clamping force needed to secure the wheel at the loads the vehicle is designed for

FAMILIAR TERRITORY
The cabin and engine bay are standard Ranger offerings.

BIGGER BODY

We mentioned the new sheetmetal where the snorkel bolts on, and this is part of an SD-only front-end redesign.

The 'guards are taller and have higher wheel openings for the increased wheel travel and tyre height. The bonnet and grille are both SD-specific items, and a metal bumper mounts directly to the front of the chassis. The bumper has mounts for accessories such as lights, antennas or a sand flag, but it's not designed to carry a powered winch. For a winch you'll need a bullbar or other aftermarket front bumper.

Ford's partnership with ARB 4x4 Accessories has given the brand a head start, and ARB has already developed bars and other products for the Super Duty. You can bet other manufacturers won't be far behind with their own SD accessories.

The cab section will come in single-, extra- and double-cab configurations and is carried over from the regular Ranger range. The wider wheel track of the Super Duty also allows for a wider rear tray, which you can clearly see in the mirrors. Those mirrors are larger than regular Ranger items, though accessory towing mirrors are still recommended.

The SD debuts a new DAT rear bar that mounts under the integrated 4500kg-rated towbar and houses all of the Driver Assistance Tech hardware such as parking sensors, cameras and tow-control sensors. These components previously had to be relocated or deleted when fitting a tray or service body, but with the DAT bar they're retained with full functionality.

When the XLT double-cab ute-bed model arrives in 2026, it too will have a wider cargo tub extending over the wheel track with bespoke wheel arches for extra tyre clearance.

INSIDE JOB

Cab-chassis Super Duties are available in a single specification, featuring cloth seats, a 12-inch multimedia screen, an 8-inch driver display, vinyl floor coverings, wireless phone charger, auxiliary switch panel, drive modes, and all the usual Ranger ADAS and safety tech.

Smart Hitch towing aids and an integrated trailer brake controller are also included for those who tow.

The 2026 Super Duty XLT double-cab will add carpets, heated and ventilated leather seats and all-weather floor mats from mid-2026. It will also come with a ute tub and the Super Duty-branded alloy wheels – which look ace!

FORD RANGER SUPER DUTY MODEL RANGE

- Single-cab chassis – $82,990
- Double-cab chassis – $86,490
- Double-cab chassis (HD pack) – $89,990
- Double-cab pick-up – mid-2026 release
- XLT Series – from mid-2026

ON AND OFF ROAD

The launch drive for the Ranger Super Duty presented us with a fleet of single- and extra-cab models fitted with trays, and the chance to sample them on sealed and unsealed roads, a man-made off-road course, and a real-world trek up to Mount Terrible on the edge of the Victorian High Country.

We chose an extra-cab, as we see it more as a touring rig than a single-cab thanks to its additional interior space – and because we've never previously been able to get into an extra-cab Ranger of any kind.

At first glance the Super Duty looks physically larger than a regular Ranger thanks to its beefier front-end styling, taller tyres and extra ride height, but once you step inside it's familiar territory. The cabin layout and controls are pure Ranger, although it's a little odd to see the larger 12-inch multimedia screen in a model with cloth seats. Still, all the controls operate as expected, and anyone who has driven a P703 Ranger will feel instantly at home – which is a good thing, because the interior design remains one of the most functional and practical in the midsize ute segment.

Hit the start button and the Lion V6 fires up with a familiar rumble, while the Ranger e-shifter feels like the unwelcome cousin at Christmas lunch – you know it well, but you also know you could do better.

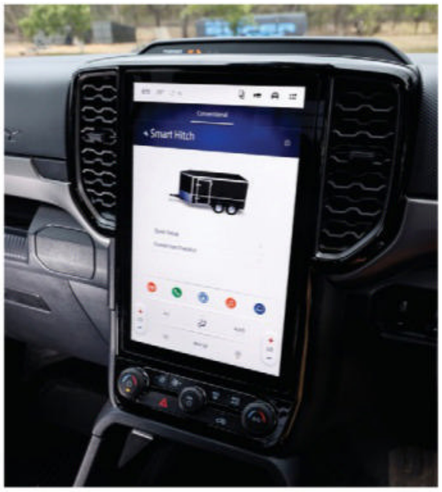
That's where the similarities end, because as soon as you drive off you can feel the difference in the Super Duty chassis.

Any vehicle built to haul and carry these kinds of loads will always feel stiffer on the road, and you will notice every bump. This isn't just due to the strengthened chassis and firmer suspension – the LT-rated tyres also contribute, with their heavy-duty sidewalls adding further rigidity.

We expect the ride to improve with some weight in the tray, but we'll have to wait for our own testing to confirm that, as all the launch vehicles were unladen.

The ride quality isn't harsh or uncomfortable, but it's a long way from the plush ride of a regular Ford Ranger. It's a constant reminder of what this vehicle is built to do, and if you were considering a Super Duty purely for its tougher looks, be prepared for the compromised ride quality when running

With the increased ride height and snorkel, it gives the Super Duty a higher wading depth of 850mm



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unladen. This isn't a flaw in the Ranger Super Duty – it's simply the reality of a purpose-built workhorse.

Another negative of the SD's tyres is that their increased diameter affects acceleration, and when you add this to the extra weight of the Super Duty, you really feel the difference in pick-up when you put your boot into it.

We noticed the same effect when we went up to 285/70 tyres on our V6 Ranger Sport a couple of years back; taller tyres always hurt acceleration and fuel economy.

Out on the road, the suspension does an amazing job of controlling the SD's mass, and it handles a mountain road better than any truck with this sort of capability should. It feels firm but well planted, turns into corners precisely and holds its line with ease.

This is also where the e-shifter became annoying, as the small buttons on the side of the handle for manual gear selection are less than ideal for regular use. Despite all our time in Rangers with this gear selector, its use still isn't second nature.

This annoyance would be amplified if you had a load on or were towing and needed to downshift to make full use of the engine braking.

On both the man-made 4x4 track and the rocky climb up the Mount Terrible track, the Super Duty made light work of the obstacles. On the test track we were able to try the Turn Control function, which brakes the inside rear wheel to reduce the turning radius on tight off-road corners, and the Trail Control system which – like Toyota's Crawl Control and Kia's X-Mode – gives the driver low-speed cruise control with excellent torque distribution for climbing and descending steep or technical terrain. It's one off-road ADAS feature that really works well and is genuinely worth using.

Most of the off-road sections were easy enough to traverse in Mud and Ruts mode, and for anything trickier it was simply a matter of selecting low range manually and locking the centre and rear diffs to get us up and over. There was no need for the front locker in this instance.

The taller bonnet of the Super Duty does make it a little harder to see the track ahead, but the 360° camera and under-vehicle view make things much easier, both in front and behind.

Speaking of behind, thanks to the DAT rear bar all of the Driver Assistance Tech hardware – including parking sensors and cameras – remains fully functional.

SUMMARY

Our first impressions of the Ranger SD left us thinking the Ranger certainly deserves its Super Duty stamping. It brings new levels of capability and functionality to the midsize 4x4 market and removes the need for aftermarket GVM upgrades and hardware, with everything now covered by Ford.

This is a unique vehicle designed to fill a niche in the market – but it's a niche that will also appeal to touring four-wheel drivers.

WORK & PLAY
The Ranger SD should be popular with both fleet and recreational users.

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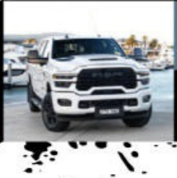


WORDS **MATT RAUDONIKIS**

RAM FORCE

BIGGER IS BETTER IN US PICKUPS AND THE RAM HD IS A BIG TRUCK DESIGNED TO HAUL BIG LOADS

RAM Trucks Australia (RTA) has launched its heavy-duty models locally, introducing a two-model line-up. The 2025 RAM HD range was only released in the US earlier this year, so it's significant that Australian buyers are getting the new models so soon.

While the US range of RAM HDs is extensive – with various grades, models, body styles and cab configurations – in Australia RTA is offering just two: the 2500 and the 3500, both in high-spec, luxury-grade, dual-cab pickup configurations. While the US truck market in Australia is growing, it's still small by American standards, so homologating dozens of variants for our buyers would be prohibitive.

The RAM 2500 HD is priced at $172,950 plus on-road costs, while the RAM 3500 HD will set you back $177,950 plus on-roads. These prices are unchanged from the previous generation of RAM HD trucks, despite the 2025 models boasting higher specifications and more equipment.

The RAM HD's main competitor in Australia is the Chevrolet Silverado 2500 from GMSV, although Chevrolet doesn't offer a 3500 or larger variant locally.

Ford doesn't sell a Super Duty version of the F-250 in Australia, although these and other models are available through third-party importers. Toyota, meanwhile, doesn't produce a heavy-duty version of its Tundra pickup.

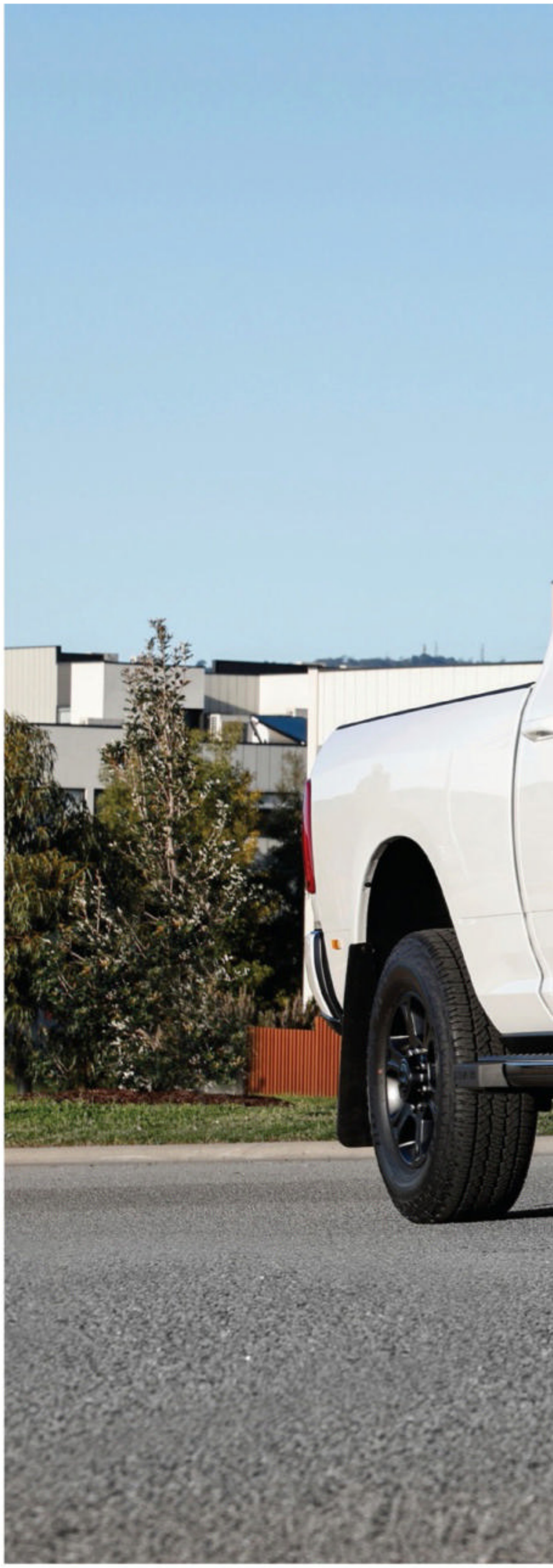
RAM's big-ticket headline for its heavy-duty trucks is the upgrade to the legendary Cummins inline six-cylinder turbo-diesel engine, which now produces a massive 1458Nm of torque. By comparison, Chevrolet's V8 Duramax diesel generates 1322Nm, while Ford's 6.7-litre Power Stroke diesel makes 1423Nm in standard trim and a hefty 1627Nm in HO tune.

The main difference between the RAM 2500 and 3500 models offered in Australia by RTA lies in their load capacities. The 2500 has a Gross Combination Mass (GCM) of 12,750kg and a payload of 785kg, compared to the 3500's GCM of 14,433kg and payload of 1652kg.

While both RAM HD models are rated to tow up to 3500kg on a 50mm tow ball, 4500kg on a 70mm ball, or 8000kg using a fifth-wheel or gooseneck connection, they share the same chassis and axles. The key difference lies in the rear suspension: the 3500 runs leaf springs, while the 2500 rides on coils in a multi-link setup.

Both RAM models feature a new 8-speed ZF automatic transmission and a part-time, dual-range 4x4 transfer case.

The front end of the 2025 HD range is distinguished by new headlights, grille and front-end styling, while the 3500 is only differentiated by '3500' badging on the bonnet vents.



LUXE LOAD LUGGERS

RTA views its heavy-duty models as premium towing and load-hauling vehicles – not the kind of trucks anyone will be dumping rubble into or converting into off-road racers. As such, the Australian-spec models come from the US with a host of standard features that would normally appear on the extensive options list back home.

All RTA models come standard with the Black Pack, which does away with chrome exterior highlights in favour of black accents, mirrors and grille. Both models ride on black 18-inch alloy wheels.

Inside, features include leather-trimmed seats with power adjustment, plus heating and cooling for the front pews. The RAM HD models are now five-seat only, with no third perch in the middle of the front row as in previous generations. Instead, there's a massive centre console between the front seats.

The exterior mirrors are power-adjustable not only for angle but can also extend outward to provide a wider field of vision when towing.

A new 12.3-inch digital instrument cluster and 12-inch multimedia display stretch across the dash, while the premium Alpine sound system features nine speakers plus a subwoofer. Wired and wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto are included, along with dual wireless smartphone chargers.

The rear seat offers ample space for three adults and provides generous under-seat storage, along with a flat load area when folded out for carrying gear.

There's a powered sunroof above the front seats and a power-operated sliding rear window.

Passengers are protected by six airbags (two front, two side and two curtain), a 360° camera, front and rear parking sensors, lane-keeping assistance, autonomous emergency braking with pedestrian and cyclist detection, blind-spot warning, rear cross-traffic alert and tyre pressure monitoring.

While the payloads are on the low side, the cargo bed is enormous – perfect for hauling a big load of polystyrene or balsa wood. The US-spec power outlets have been deleted and not replaced with locally compatible units, but you do get a damped tailgate, spray-in bedliner and a kick-out step underneath to make climbing in easier.

RAM'S BIG-TICKET HEADLINE FOR ITS HEAVY-DUTY TRUCKS IS THE UPGRADE TO THE LEGENDARY CUMMINS INLINE SIX-CYLINDER TURBO-DIESEL ENGINE

HAULIN' ASS
The 3500 makes light work of towing a big boat

DRIVE TIME

Climb into the RAM 2500 and you're greeted by a big, spacious and luxurious cabin – exactly as you'd expect. The seating position is high, offering an excellent view over the massive bonnet, and all the controls are easy to locate and operate.

Our 30-minute road loop took in highways, backroads, hills, valleys and a stretch of gravel. The RAM 2500 felt stable and sure-footed in all conditions, and it was easy to handle on the narrower sections.

The 6.7-litre Cummins engine delivers torque on tap for any situation and never feels lacking… but this is a heavy vehicle – it's no sports ute.

The abundance of torque on tap needs to be managed, as the RAM will easily light up its rear tyres if you floor it from a standstill. We experienced this pulling out onto a 100km/h highway – aiming to get up to speed quickly and safely – when wheelspin triggered the traction control, cutting power and causing a brief hesitation.

While the electronic traction control (ETC) system does its job, it could be better managed with a full-time or on-demand 4x4 setup like that fitted to the RAM 1500. We experienced similar issues driving the 1500 in the wet, but switching the transfer case from 2WD to 4x4 Auto controlled wheelspin without cutting power, resulting in smoother and safer acceleration. The HD models don't offer a 4x4 Auto function.

This issue is amplified when you start adding more weight to the truck – such as a heavy trailer behind it – just as many owners are likely to do.

With a 3500kg caravan hitched to the back of the RAM 3500, we floored the throttle on a dry road and it spun the rear wheels through first and second gear, and into third… with the ETC chattering away in an effort to prevent the wheel spin.

This wheel spin would be far worse on wet or gravel surfaces, and a full-time 4x4 system would go a long way toward eliminating it.

Once up and running, the RAM 3500 made light work of towing the big van. There's no shortage of power, the transmission shifts smoothly, and the leaf-spring rear suspension remained unfazed by the load – it's designed to carry considerably more.

The Cummins engine also features an exhaust brake to help rein in the rig on long, steep descents – or just to feed your big-rig driving fantasies.

STONKING!
It's the only word to describe the Cummins Six

SUMMARY

Towing heavy trailers in comfort and luxury is exactly what the HD RAMs are built for – and they do it exceptionally well. The driveline specifications and equipment levels are spot-on for the job and the price-point, with the lack of full-time on-road 4x4 being the one big deficiency.

When you travel Australian highways and see the size of the vans, boats and other trailers people are hitching up behind these trucks – often worth far more than the tow vehicle itself – it's easy to see why owners value safety and comfort above all else. The RAM HD 2500 and 3500 fill that role well, and they're so comfortable it feels like you could drive on for days.

	RAM 2500/3500
PRICE	$172,950 (2500 HD); $177,950 (3500 HD)
ENGINE	6.7-litre in-line six-cylinder Cummins diesel
MAX POWER	313kW at 3200rpm
MAX TORQUE	1458Nm at 1800rpm
TRANSMISSION	8-speed automatic, 2WD and 4WD
4X4 SYSTEM	Part-time, dual range 4x4
FRONT SUSPENSION	Live axle on coil springs, stabiliser bar
REAR SUSPENSION	Live axle multilink on coil springs (2500); live axle on leaf springs (3500)
TYRES	LT 275/70R18 AT on 18 x 8-inch alloys (steel spare)
KERB WEIGHT	3710kg (2500 HD); 3700kg (3500 HD)
GVM	4495kg (2500 HD); 5352kg (3500 HD, NB2 category)
GCM	12,750kg (2500 HD); 14,433 (3500 HD)
TOWING CAPACITY	3500kg (50mm ball); 450kg (70mm ball); 8000kg (fifth-wheel / gooseneck)
PAYLOAD	785kg (2500 HD); 1652kg (3500 HD)
SEATS	5
FUEL TANK	117 litres (28L Ad Blue)
ADR FUEL CONSUMPTION	N/a
ON TEST FUEL CONSUMPTION	N/a

RAM 2500/3500

A DEPARTURE ANGLE	25.8°
B RAMPOVER ANGLE	N/A
C APPROACH ANGLE	22.9°
D WADING DEPTH	N/A
E GROUND CLEARANCE	222-237mm

THE ABUNDANCE OF TORQUE ON TAP NEEDS TO BE MANAGED, AS THE RAM WILL EASILY LIGHT UP ITS REAR TYRES IF YOU FLOOR IT FROM A STANDSTILL

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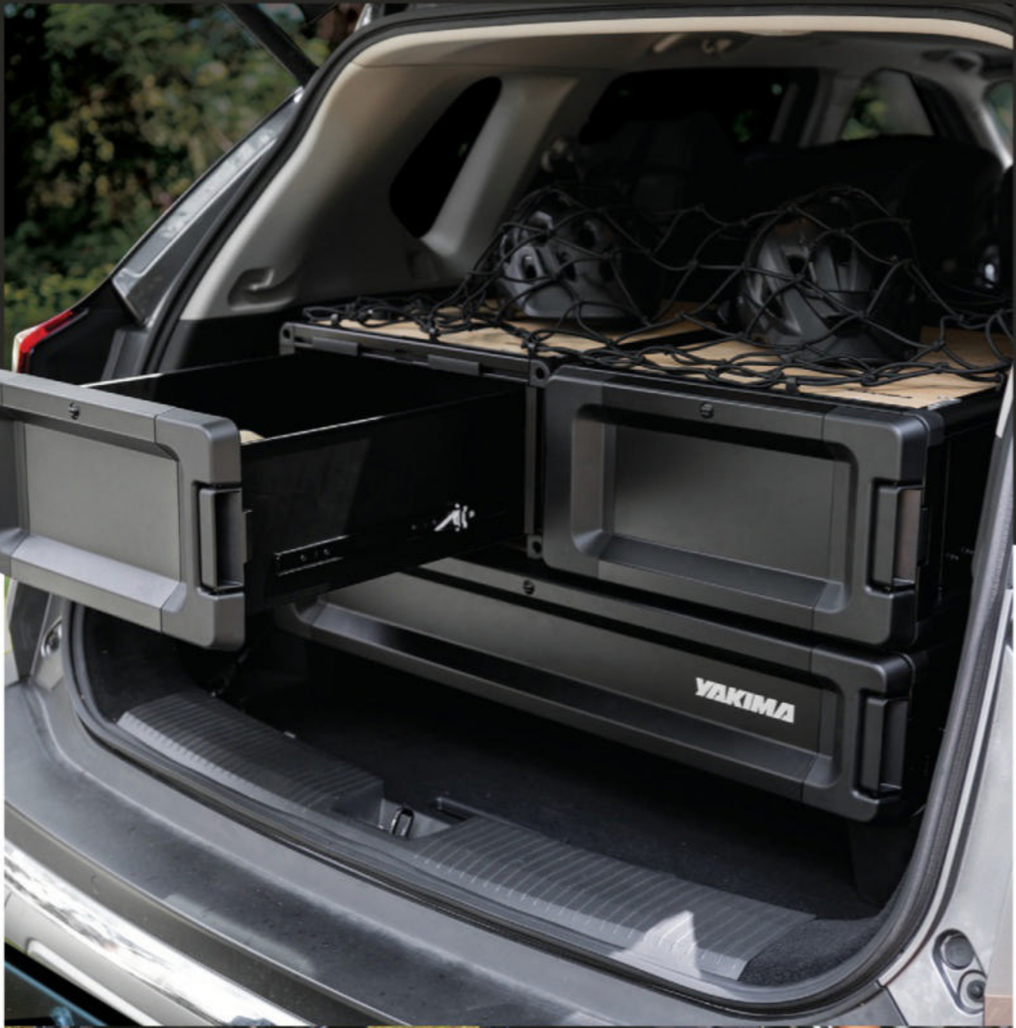

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G*UP

A DIESEL POWERTRAIN ADDS PRACTICALITY TO MERCEDES-BENZ AUSTRALIA'S G-CLASS LINE UP

WORDS MATT RAUDONIKIS **PHOTOS** MERCEDES-BENZ

Mercedes-Benz Australia has reinstated a diesel-powered G-Class wagon to its line-up of G-Wagen models. The new G450d joins the popular AMG G63 and all-electric G580 in the exclusive stable of premium off-roaders.

The G450d lands with a starting MRLP of $214,900, but that figure soon climbs once you add on-road costs or tick any of the Mercedes-Benz option packs.

Optional packs include the MANUFAKTUR Exterior Package at $4100 (MRLP), which adds paint finishes in either Obsidian Black or Night Black Magno, with matching bumpers and flared wheel arches; the Interior Comfort Package ($8500 MRLP) brings a heated windscreen, heated steering wheel and heated armrests for the driver and front passenger, while rear occupants benefit from the MBUX High-End Rear Seat Entertainment System featuring two fully integrated 11.6-inch displays connected to the main multimedia platform; and the PROFESSIONAL Exterior Package ($15,900 MRLP) adds roof luggage rack and a spare wheel cover in body colour with a stainless-steel ring.

Then there's the AMG Luxury Package ($18,000 MRLP) that adds silver under-tray protection, AMG brake calipers, a silver chrome radiator grille and protective strips with aluminium-look inserts, illuminated stainless-steel door sills, stainless-steel rear loading-sill protection and AMG-branded floor mats to add detail to the cabin. Inside, a multifunction sports steering wheel in Nappa leather, black microfibre roof liner, ionisation of interior air and a leather-trimmed upper dashboard reinforce the premium focus. Completing the package are 20-inch AMG 5-twin-spoke light-alloy wheels and side running boards for easier entry.

Finally, there's the Night Package ($5600 MRLP) – available only with the AMG Luxury Package – or the Superior Line Interior Plus Package ($14,200 MRLP), also available exclusively with the AMG Luxury Package.

Still, the G450d is the most affordable model in the G-Class range, with the AMG G63 priced at $368,400 (+ORC), the new AMG G63 Offroad Pro at $383,900 (+ORC), and the all-electric G580 starting at $249,900 (+ORC).

Prior to the introduction of this G450d, the last diesel-powered G-Wagen offered

MERCEDES-BENZ G450D

A DEPARTURE ANGLE	29.9°
B RAMPOVER ANGLE	23.5°
C APPROACH ANGLE	30.9°
D WADING DEPTH	700mm
E GROUND CLEARANCE	241mm

in Australia was the G400d back in 2021, but that model was short-lived. Significantly, the G400d was the first G-Wagen with an independent front suspension and a wider cabin designed to enhance interior comfort. For the 40 years before that, G-Wagens always ran live axles front and rear.

The independent front suspension carries over to the G450d, and that's a good thing for overall driveability and handling. It gives the G-Class characteristics more in line with its target market's expectations.

Likewise, the well-appointed wider cabin delivers a luxurious feel while retaining that vault-like solidity when you slam the doors closed.

The G450d's interior benefits from the model update that followed the G400d, introducing a new dashboard, multimedia system and overall cabin fit-out. These updates were first seen in the G63 and G580 models currently on sale.

The G450d retains the 3.0-litre OM656 inline six-cylinder engine previously used in the G400d, but it now benefits from an integrated starter-generator and a 48-volt electrical system, lifting claimed combined outputs to 270kW and 750Nm – up from 243kW and 700Nm in the G400d.

This mighty engine is still paired with a nine-speed automatic transmission, full-time four-wheel drive and triple diff locks for supreme off-road capability. Unfortunately, most G-Wagen buyers will never fully appreciate the vehicle's off-road abilities.

We had the opportunity to test the G450d's capability firsthand with a day trip to Bunyip State Forest, near Melbourne.

Climbing into the G-Wagen brings a welcome sense of familiarity despite the years since we last experienced the model. The cabin isn't large but offers ample space and feels more accommodating than earlier versions. The doors close with a solid clunk, giving the impression the G-Wagen has been carved from a single billet of steel.

The plush leather seats and rich interior trims soften that metallic edge, delivering the comfort expected of a luxury Mercedes. High equipment levels and a premium multimedia system further reinforce the upmarket feel.

The G450d feels smooth and composed on both highways and backroads heading out of town. The engine is silky and its torque delivery seamless, pairing

BUSH BENZES
Our convoy of G-wagens made the forest drive easy

perfectly with the nine-speed transmission. This could be the best diesel engine I've ever driven – and that's saying something, considering I was behind the wheel of a Cummins-powered Ram just days earlier.

Benz's OM inline-six does a superb job of masking any diesel clatter or vibration, continually feeding that syrupy-smooth wave of torque.

The G feels heavy in tight turns when the mountain roads get twisty, but you don't need to wrestle it like the old live-axle G-Professional models. The 18-inch wheel and tyre package strikes a great balance between ride quality and handling, while still offering enough sidewall height and all-terrain tread for off-road travel. This was especially appreciated when the forest roads turned to gravel and the Benz never put a foot wrong, and there was no excessive ADAS intervention.

The G-Wagen's platform is stiff and doesn't allow a lot of wheel travel, but the rear axle still slinks through deep ruts while the independent front suspension is surprisingly competent. When things got rougher, we made use of the diff-lock buttons in the centre of the dash, engaging the centre and then rear diffs as needed, without ever requiring the front locker on these tracks.

The G450d adds a more practical option to the G-Wagen range in Australia. It maintains the luxury and capability of the iconic Geländewagen, but with the efficiency of its superb diesel powerplant and sensible all-terrain tyres.

The AMG G63 might be the ball-tearing hot rod of the G range, and the G580 might give you that warm, fuzzy feeling of saving the planet, but the G450d delivers the happy medium for any and all adventures.

AMG G63 OFFROAD PRO

Around the same time the G450d landed in Australia, Mercedes-Benz also introduced the AMG G63 Offroad Pro model (below) to the range.

The Offroad Pro takes the stonking AMG G63 – with its bellowing 430kW twin-turbo V8 – and adds extra off-road prowess thanks to clever technologies within the AMG Active Ride Control and Traction Pro systems.

The AMG Active Ride Control suspension with active hydraulic roll stabilisation uses specially tuned dampers with increased piston diameters and larger pressure reservoirs, claimed to enhance axle articulation and overall stability.

AMG Active Balance Control further refines handling by allowing roll stiffness to be adjusted in three stages (LOW, MID, HIGH), tailoring stability for everything from loose rock to fast sand tracks.

Traction Pro enhances the electronic traction control system to better cope with rough terrain, while the G63 retains its triple diff locks for ultimate traction – even on the standard 20-inch wheels and tyres.

The Offroad Pro kit also includes rubber floor mats, mudflaps and a flat alloy roof platform with access ladder.

We're not sure there are many G63 owners who'll actually take their AMG off-road, but at least with this kit, they'll look like they can.

	MERCEDES-BENZ G450D
PRICE	From $214,900 +ORC
ENGINE	I6 turbo-diesel
CAPACITY	2925cc
MAX POWER	270kW
MAX TORQUE	750Nm
TRANSMISSION	9-speed automatic
4X4 SYSTEM	Full time w/ locking centre diff and dual range. Front and rear diff locks
CONSTRUCTION	5-door wagon body on a ladder frame chassis
FRONT SUSPENSION	Independent double wishbone w/ coil springs
REAR SUSPENSION	Live axle with multi-links and coil springs
TYRES	265/60R18 on alloy wheels
KERB WEIGHT	2535kg
GVM	3200kg
PAYLOAD	665kg
TOWING CAPACITY	3500kg
SEATING CAPACITY	5
FUEL TANK	112L /3 1.6L AdBlue
ADR FUEL CLAIM	9.4L/100km
ON-TEST FUEL CONSUMPTION	n/a

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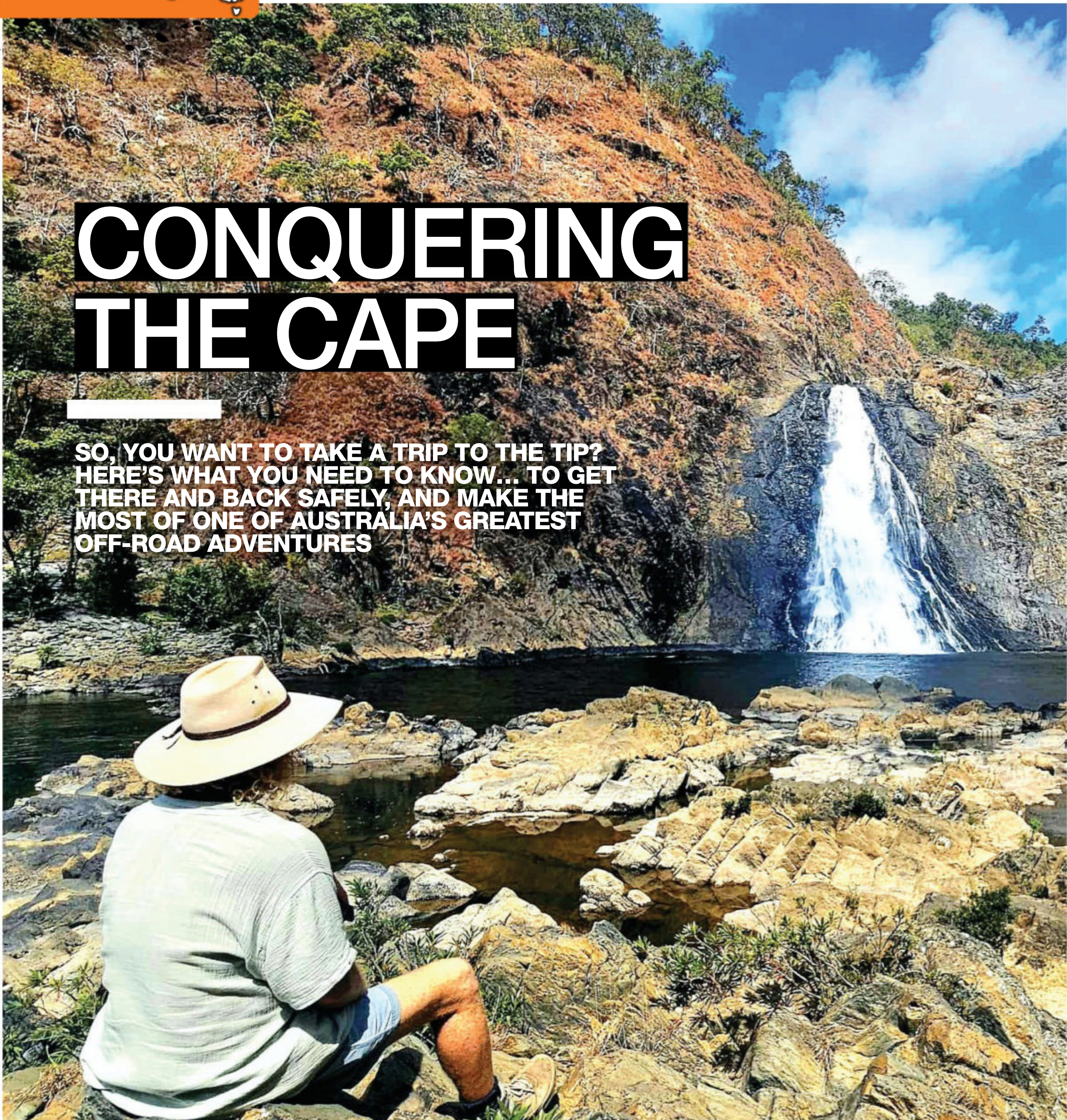


CONQUERING THE CAPE

WORDS AND PHOTOS MARK ALLEN

SO, YOU WANT TO TAKE A TRIP TO THE TIP? HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW… TO GET THERE AND BACK SAFELY, AND MAKE THE MOST OF ONE OF AUSTRALIA'S GREATEST OFF-ROAD ADVENTURES

You've set your sights on one of Australia's most iconic outback adventures – the Cape York Peninsula.

You've watched countless online videos showing the legendary obstacles, must-see destinations, 4x4-killing river crossings, massive beach-caught fish and, of course, heard one too many stories about croc attacks.

Now you reckon you're ready to hit the long bitumen stretches and tackle the rough, rugged and remote beauty that defines the geographical top of Australia.

Our own Mark Allen has just returned from an eight-week, 10,000km journey to the Tip and has plenty of tall tales, tips and hard-earned wisdom to help you get there and back safely, and in one piece.

WHAT TO EXPECT

For many, their version of Cape York is a highlight reel of busted 4x4s – flipped, bogged, drowned and overloaded with every accessory under the sun – followed by trackside repairs, flatbed recoveries and all manner of mechanical carnage, all in the name of viewer numbers.

Yes, that can all happen – and sometimes does – but it's the minority of visitors who suffer that fate. That's not to say a well-set-up 4x4, driven carefully and sensibly, can't still come a cropper. Any make of 4x4, and any aftermarket accessory, can fail. Remember Murphy's Law? It can bite hard, and usually in the most remote spot possible.

What you can expect, though, is the experience of a lifetime: the sights, the driving, the touring, and the camaraderie of like-minded travellers all heading the same way, helping strangers just because that's what you do out here.

WILL THE CAPE DESTROY YOUR VEHICLE?

It has the ability to shake the living daylights out of your 4x4, bend metal and drown engines. But it can just as easily be the spark that ignites a lifelong urge to explore every remote corner of this great land.

That's what happened after my first visit back in 1991. I'm far from an expert on the region – I've only been to the Tip a handful of times – but I've always managed to avoid serious damage, both mechanical and mental. Just a few mud-splattered panels and a collection of mosquito bites to show for it.

Take the time to secure your number plates

WHAT COULD INFLICT DAMAGE TO MY 4X4?

Speed, weight and stupidity.

Taking your time with just about everything up on the Cape will go a long way towards keeping your 4x4 in one piece. Hit potholes too fast, slide around blind corners rally-style, charge headlong into deep water crossings or lose patience altogether, and you'll soon find yourself parked trackside – or worse, strapped to the back of an expensive flatbed.

Yes, maintaining a bit of speed helps iron out corrugations, which in turn improves the overall ride of your 4x4. However, failing to spot and hitting the big holes or washouts is a surefire way to destroy your suspension.

It's an art – going fast enough to skim over long corrugated sections, but slow enough to avoid hammering the big hits. It all comes down to concentration and mechanical sympathy. Keeping a constant eye on the track ahead – both close and mid-distance – is vital to steer clear of the nasties.

Having the nous to remember you're not driving a long-travel off-road racer, and treating your mechanical steed with care, will see even the most basic suspension setup survive the Cape.

If you've got adjustable shock absorbers, use them. You might need to trial a few different front and rear

Gunshot 8km ↑
Northern bypass road 27.4 km →
Northern old telegraph bypass 25 km →

Bypass tracks offer a way around some of the severe obstacles settings for compression and rebound, but it'll be worth the effort for overall ride quality. The same applies if you're running airbags – adjust the pressure to suit your load and the track conditions.

By far the biggest adjustment you can make is to tyre pressures. Dropping them to suit the terrain will help your suspension – and the rest of your 4x4 – smooth corrugations into something more manageable. You'll never completely eliminate the constant vibration, but getting your tyre pressures and speed right can take you from bone-jarringly punishing to just plain harsh – and there's a big difference!

Keeping the loaded weight of your 4x4 as low as possible will go a long way toward helping your suspension and tyres cope with the punishment. If you're at or over GVM, shed as much weight as you can before you even roll out of the driveway. Failing to do so can have dire consequences – anything from sagged suspension to a bent or cracked chassis.

Stupidity. Some people are born with it, some develop it over time, and others catch it from watching too many of the wrong online influencers. Some of these so-called online heroes have a lot to answer for – not only for the damage they do to their vehicles but also to the environment.

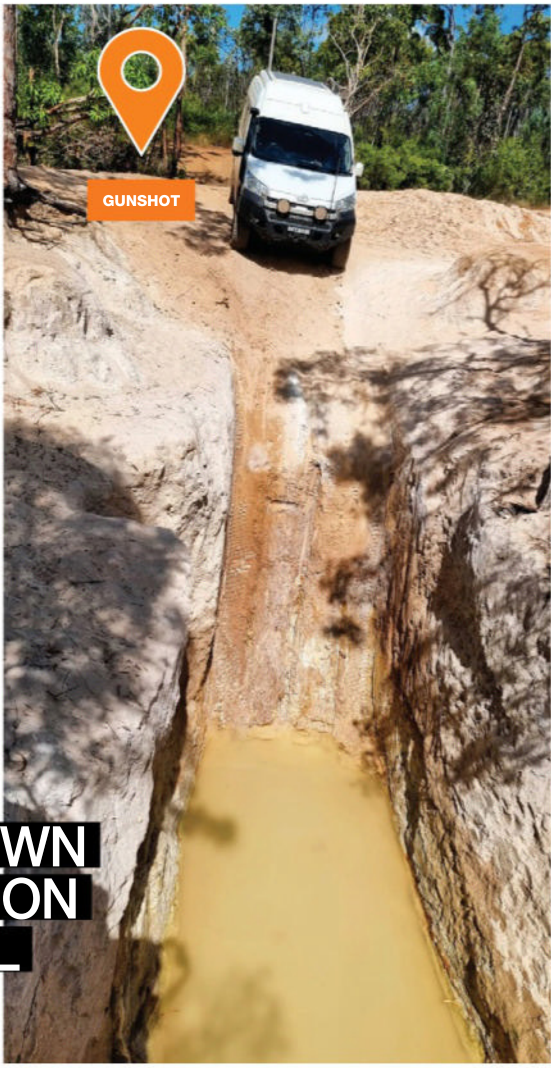
Foolish people, or those making ill-advised choices, often emulate these uncaring influencers. Some of it comes down to speed and overpacking their 4x4s (see my previous notes), and some to poorly chosen accessories fitted to a 4x4 that's being misused.

Say you've kitted out your 4x4 for extreme rock crawling at low speeds. I get it – I've done that and love it – but that's not how you set up a well-mannered off-road touring machine. Horses for courses when it comes to accessories.

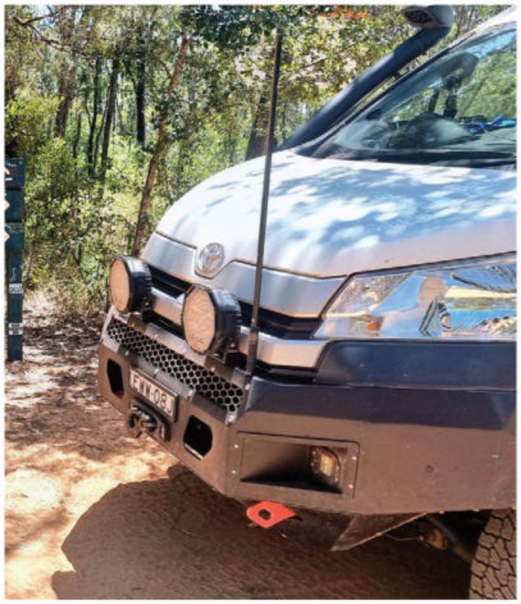
If you're not sure, a simple tip is to make sure your suspension mods, tyre sizes and fitted accessories comply with the well-documented legalities. Overly tall or overly flexible suspension setups aren't ideal for outback travel, and the same goes for excessively large tyre diameters. Sure, they look cool, but they place enormous stress on steering, braking and suspension components.

That's not to say there aren't quality aftermarket accessories that can be legally fitted to 4x4s – there absolutely are – but use your head and think about what's really needed for off-road touring compared with extreme rock crawling.

IT ALL COMES DOWN TO CONCENTRATION AND MECHANICAL SYMPATHY



Gunshot – the most notorious, sphincter-clenching drop you'll find in The Cape



GUNSHOT

Let's devote some time to the most infamous 4x4 drop into the unknown that Cape York has to offer. That's not to say it's the only one – Palm Creek is every bit as gnarly, steep and scary as Gunshot – just not as well-known or spectacular.

In the two days we spent watching dozens of 4x4s tackle Gunshot, one thing stood out: you don't need the biggest and best 4x4 to conquer this ultra-steep, eyes-wide-open, white-knuckle plunge into the slop. No siree. Most of the drivers who made it down without damage were in fairly basic, sensibly set-up rigs and relied on caution and care rather than brute force.

Yes, the highly modified trucks got through too, but the vehicles that tended to suffer damage were the larger wagons (Y62 Patrols, 200 Series LandCruisers) and big American utes, often with wide accessories like snorkels and bulky side awnings. Not because of poor driving or design flaws, but because of their sheer width – scraping down the banks and tearing off expensive bits. That's an easy couple of grand in repairs once you're home.

I'm not here to tell you not to do this crossing, but weigh the pros and cons before dropping in – once you commit, there's no turning back. It's one hell of a ride down.

MARINE STINGERS ARE PRESENT IN THESE WATERS DURING THE SUMMER MONTHS

BITTEN

You will get bitten while travelling around Cape York. Treated with respect, the only thing that should bite you are mosquitoes and midges. As for crocs and stingers, they're the real deal – both are highly potent threats. Sure, there's a recognised stinger season, so it may be safe to swim when they're not supposed to be around, but crocs don't follow calendars.

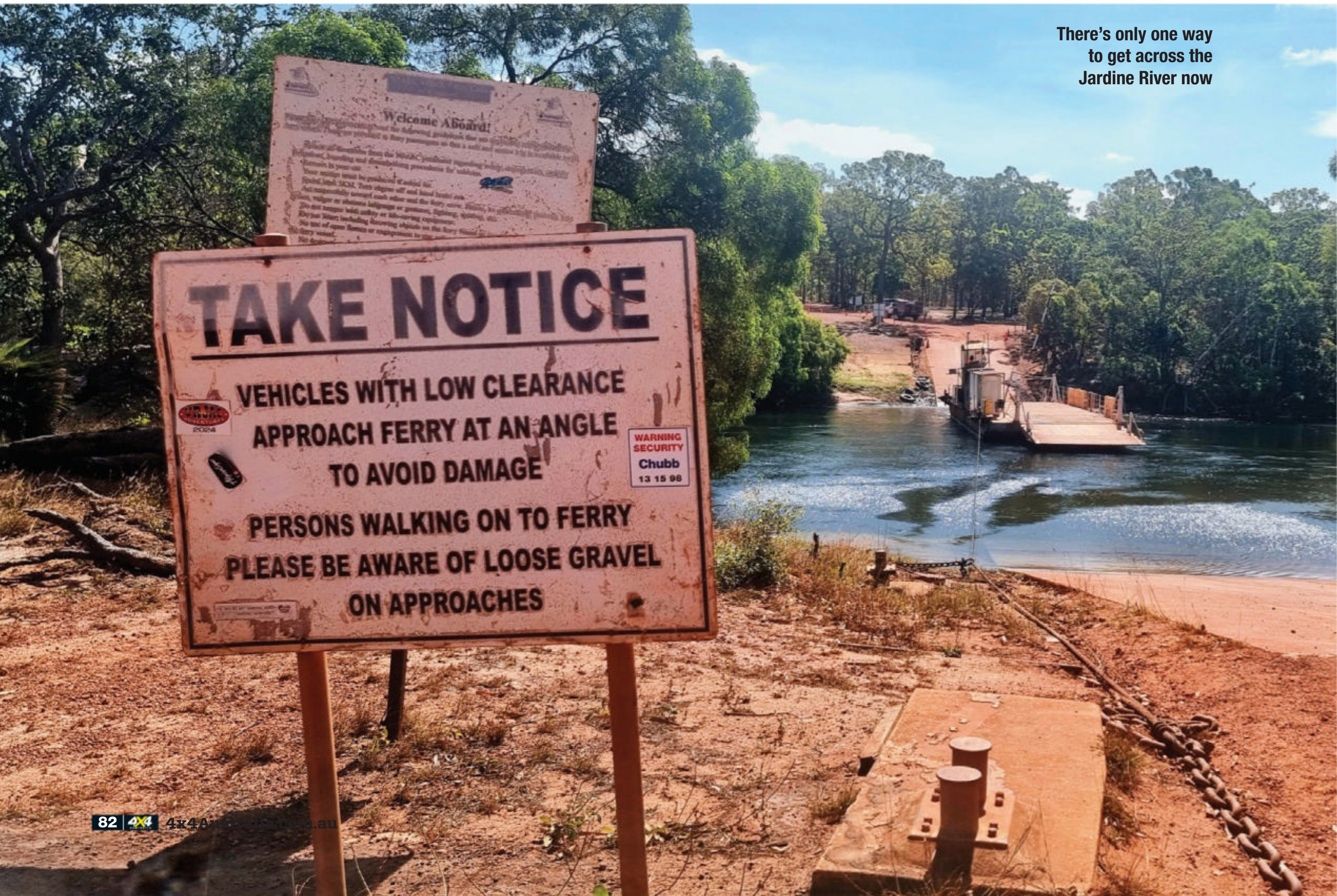
There are warning signs at most waterholes shouting Achtung! about the dangers. Just because you or your fellow travellers haven't seen one doesn't mean they're not there. Assume they're always lurking – waiting patiently for an easy meal.

Prevention is the best way to deal with anything that might bite (or eat) you. For midges and mozzies, cover up, use repellent, and fit fine-mesh screens to your camping setup. It's hard to avoid the bites altogether, but you can certainly reduce them. As for crocs, it's simple: stay out of the water.

HEAT AND HUMIDITY

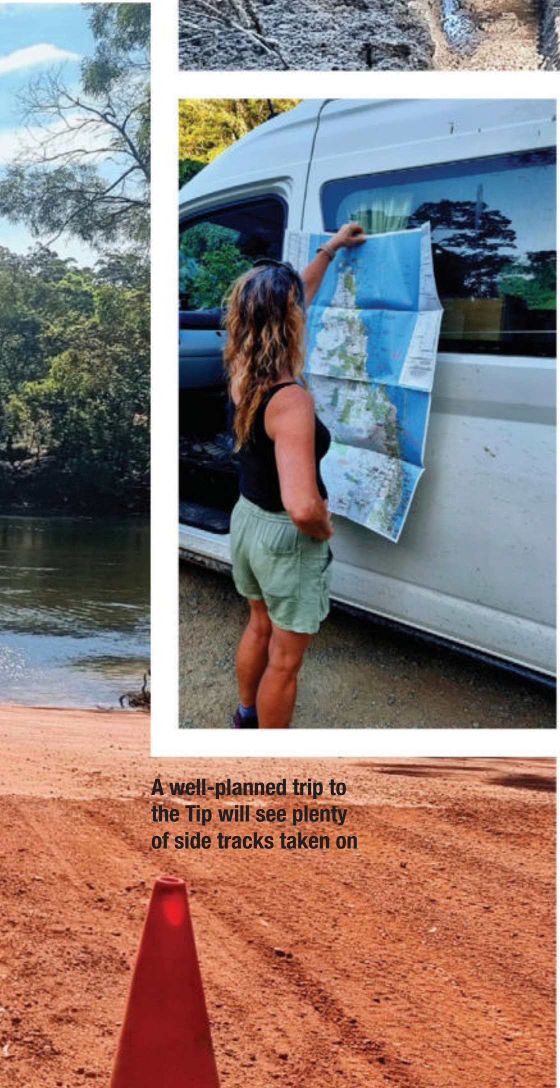
It'll be hot and humid up in the Cape – how hot depends on when you visit, but there's no escaping it. If you don't cope well with that kind of climate, or you tend to overheat or dehydrate easily, take extra care to stay hydrated and as cool as possible.

Thin, long-sleeved shirts can help shield you from the harsh sun while keeping you a little cooler, and a broad-brimmed hat is essential. Whenever possible, avoid being out in the fierce midday sun – it'll drain you faster than you think.


Welcome Aboard!
TAKE NOTICE
VEHICLES WITH LOW CLEARANCE APPROACH FERRY AT AN ANGLE TO AVOID DAMAGE
PERSONS WALKING ON TO FERRY PLEASE BE AWARE OF LOOSE GRAVEL ON APPROACHES
WARNING SECURITY Chubb 13 15 98

There's only one way to get across the Jardine River now

THE CAPE CAN SHAKE YOUR 4X4 AND YOUR SANITY – BUT IT DOESN'T HAVE TO



A well-planned trip to the Tip will see plenty of side tracks taken on

IS YOUR 4X4 UP TO IT?

You don't need the toughest, most expensive, accessory-loaded 4x4 on the planet to conquer Cape York.

What you do need is a solid vehicle that's mechanically sound, with everything in good working order and properly serviced. Any make, model or colour can make it to the Tip if it's well maintained and driven sensibly.

When it comes to accessories, I always start with upgraded suspension suited to long-distance touring – a setup that can handle extra weight, improve ground clearance, and offer better articulation than stock. A dual-battery system is another must-have in this tech-heavy age. Running a fridge and charging your gear requires a system with the capacity to deliver power over extended periods.

No matter how good your 4x4 is, carrying essential spares is non-negotiable: fuel and air filters, belts, a selection of nuts and bolts, wire, tape for MacGyver repairs, and a quality tyre repair kit. Fitting decent tyres is equally important. Many factory tyres are only P-rated (passenger), so you'll want LT-rated (light truck) rubber. No, you don't need aggressive muddies – a good all-terrain tread is ideal for long highway runs, dirt tracks, water crossings and the inevitable mud you'll face up here.

And, of course, you'll need the tools to actually use those spares. A well-stocked tool kit can be the difference between a quick roadside fix and an expensive tow home.

Never leave home without a comprehensive recovery kit. That means traction boards, straps, shackles and a shovel as the bare minimum. If you're running an electric winch, make sure you've got all the associated recovery gear too – and know how to use it. A bit of practice before the trip can save you a lot of drama later.

Finally, keep your vehicle weight as light as possible; the less you haul, the longer everything will last. And if you plan on tackling deeper water crossings, a snorkel is essential. A wading sheet is also a great idea for the really deep ones to help keep water out of the engine bay.

ARE YOU UP TO IT?

A weekend local camping trip is easy. A week-long jaunt may test you. A month-long adventure really tests your wits if you're not used to adverse conditions.

Our latest escape lasted a total of two months, with approximately three to four weeks spent on the Cape. Yes, it tested us – yes, we got hot and bothered – yes, we copped a few annoying mosquito and midge bites – yes, we got bogged and had to get ourselves out – yes, we had a few minor electrical issues that we'd been prepared for – and I replaced a dust-clogged air filter thanks to all the traffic up here.

Given that we've undertaken quite a few of these longer remote trips, we're accustomed to the harsh conditions and revel in the solitude – the peace and quiet that's only found far away from city or town lights. Not everyone has had that opportunity or even wants to attempt it regularly. So, if hitting the Cape is your first real outback or remote trip, be prepared for uncomfortable days and nights, blistering heat, dust, cold, rain and general discomfort.

Of course, that's the hard side of it all; there's so much positive to escaping the rat race by visiting Cape York – adventure, meeting like-minded people, fishing, bushwalking, history and simply living a more pared-back existence, making do with what you've got.

Yes, a rooftop tinny will fit down most tracks, but do take care of overhanging branches

TRUCKS AND ROOF TOP TINNIES

Any vehicle taller than a standard 4x4 with a rooftop tent will make it to Cape York – with a few provisos.

4x4 trucks and those carting rooftop tinnies will strike branches on some tracks thanks to their extra height. Yes, you can walk alongside or ride on the roof with a machete or chainsaw to trim your way through, but given the long distances, it's simply not feasible to clear some tracks entirely. We saw a few trucks snapping branches as they bullied their way through certain campgrounds.

Our 4x4-converted HiAce (Super Long Wheelbase, with high roof) is not only taller than a Troopy with a rooftop tent, but it's also wider in the body and across the mirrors. Yes, we scraped our fair share of branches on some tracks – even badly scratched our awning cover – but we still managed to drive everywhere we wanted to. Anything higher than our van will have to avoid some routes.

The only work we'll have to do once home is a good cut and polish to remove a few scratches.

EXPECT THE EXPERIENCE OF A LIFETIME – THE SIGHTS, THE DRIVING AND THE CAMARADERIE

Campfire cooking – most of the time, it'll BYO firewood

Plenty of driftwood gets washed ashore – take care driving on the beaches

Corrugations, corrugations and, you guessed it, more corrugations

CORRUGTIONS

Like magic, thousands of corrugations appear on some sections of dirt tracks regardless of how well maintained they are. Blame it on poor shock absorbers, acceleration out of or braking into corners, or poor tyre-pressure choices.

We reckon these corrugations are designed to test both your 4x4's ability to withstand the shaking and not fall apart, as well as your mental strength to do the same.

Adjusting your speed and tyre pressures are the two most essential factors in achieving a smoother ride.

No matter what you do, you'll have to put up with horrendous corrugations at times during your trip to Cape York. For us, by far the worst were the southern and northern bypass tracks into Gunshot.

Perhaps the week after, or the following season, or anywhere in between, those tracks might be as smooth as silk… or even worse. Track conditions vary quickly depending on the weather, traffic volume and the tyre pressures, habits and speed of that traffic. There's no guessing what any track will be like the next time you tackle it.

For our 4.2-tonne, extra-long-wheelbase 4x4-van, I found that sitting between 75 and 80km/h, with front and rear tyre pressures at 25psi and 30psi, delivered an acceptable ride.

The safety trick is knowing when to hit the anchors to avoid larger dips, potholes, bulldust patches or lumps in the track. Hitting any of those at speed is a surefire way to end your holiday with damaged suspension, a bent or cracked chassis, failed roof-rack mounts, and doubly so for anything you might be towing.

Most boat trailers are not designed to be taken to The Cape

You should always know how far it is to the next town, fuel, grocery store or roadhouse

ANY MAKE, MODEL OR COLOUR CAN MAKE IT TO THE TIP IF IT'S WELL MAINTAINED

DAMAGE SEEN

Here's my count of what I saw busted and broken trackside during my latest trip to the Cape. Larger 4x4s fitted with extra-tall, ill-suited suspension – okay, it was a GU Patrol with extra-long-travel coils and no 'top hats' fitted in the rear to retain the coils at full droop. While getting a little cross-eyed tackling Gunshot, after a dozen or so other moderately accessorised touring 4x4s had conquered it, one coil popped free and wedged itself between the chassis rails and the tray.

A couple of hours' work trackside by the young-gun owners and they were on their way, but the incident came down to choosing the wrong and poorly fitted accessories. Sure, it gives them plenty of stories to tell their mates back home, but it also caused them stress and damage that need not have happened.

Nose dives and side damage at Gunshot – yes, this one crossing sure delivers its fair share of carnage to the unsuspecting, but it's avoidable. I get it, there's a little invisible badge to be worn when you can say you've conquered Gunshot, but some vehicles just shouldn't try it given the inevitable damage they'll suffer.

Not a pretty sight – don't let the tides catch you out

Let's get one thing straight – Gunshot isn't a single crossing. The original line, about 50-100 metres from today's near-vertical drops, is still in use and offers at least half a dozen entries, making for a far easier, less white-knuckled run to the bottom than the higher, narrower, more sphincter-clenching chutes you see online.

Take your time and walk the options before you commit. Watch a few vehicles to gauge whether you and your 4x4 can make it down undamaged – and continue the rest of your journey to the Tip.

Then there's Nolans – the crossing most likely to drown your 4x4. It's deep, requires a specific in-water line, and has a soft bottom that can kill your momentum just when you're picturing victory on the far bank. Getting stopped midstream at Nolans means water in the footwells, the cargo area, the electrics, the engine – and in your nightmares for nights to come.

Nolans can end your trip in a single compression stroke – a hydraulicked engine is game over, and recovery will cost you plenty. Walking the crossing, watching others go through, fitting a wading sheet, knowing the correct line and having help on hand if things go wrong will make a huge difference to how much damage you do – or don't – cop at this notorious crossing.

Towing a caravan, camper or boat can seriously increase the strain on your whole setup. Many caravans are marketed as 'off-road', but each comes with its own limits. Most boat trailers, for instance, are built for quick trips to the local ramp – not thousands of kilometres of corrugations and punishing tracks. We stopped to help one traveller whose boat trailer had sheared an axle – a small, round-section unit with basic slipper springs – after only a few hundred kays of rough dirt. Not exactly the way you want to kick off a Cape York holiday.

I'll admit, we didn't drive every section of the Old Telegraph Track. Not because we didn't want to, but because I knew our 4x4 simply didn't have the ground clearance for some of it. Considering the likelihood of damage, the cost of repairs, the distance from home, and the fact we were on a once-in-a-lifetime trip to the Tip as part of two months on the road, I wasn't about to risk it all for a fist-pumping moment of glory.

Every driver, every 4x4 owner and every tourer needs the courage to say no when they – or their vehicle – aren't capable of an obstacle, without worrying about embarrassment or ridicule. Having the sense to walk away shows more strength than blindly charging in and hoping for the best.

Follow that mindset, understand the consequences of every move you make off-road, stay prepared and drive with mechanical sympathy, and you'll conquer Cape York unscathed. And you'll also get to enjoy the trip of a lifetime.

Put yourself in this picture, take your time to enjoy the experience of swimming in FNQ

Standing at the most northern point of mainland Australia – a bucket list achievement for so many

TOYOTA
KS 7199
Kwiambal National Park
↑ Wallangra Township 15km
↑ Ashford Township 19km

WORDS AND PHOTOS KEV SMITH

KWIAMBAL CALLING

WATERFALLS, HIKING TRAILS, CAVES AND QUIET CAMPSITES — KWIAMBAL NATIONAL PARK HAS ALL THE INGREDIENTS FOR A WEEKEND ADVENTURE OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

Views for miles! The gorges are deep and spectacular

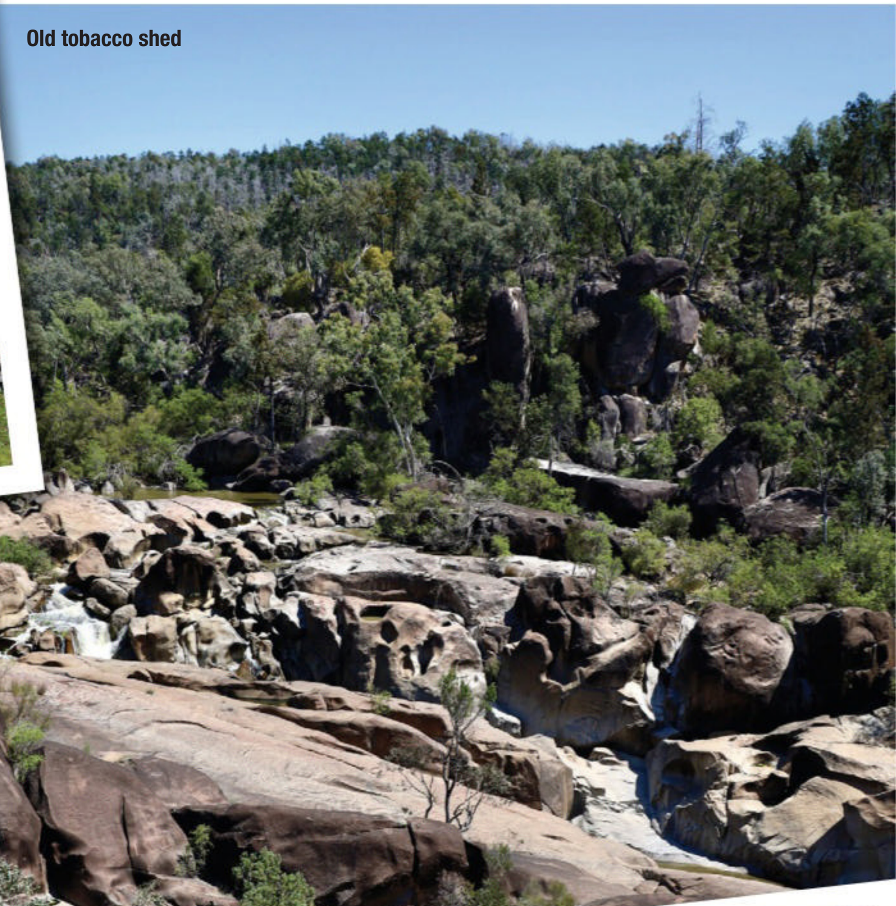
Kwiambal National Park, in northern NSW, covers just 9200ha and is the traditional country of the Kwiambal people, who descend from the Murri people of the north-west and have lived in the area for thousands of years. Evidence of their long connection remains today, with sacred sites and hunting grounds scattered throughout the park where Kwiambal ancestors once lived year-round.

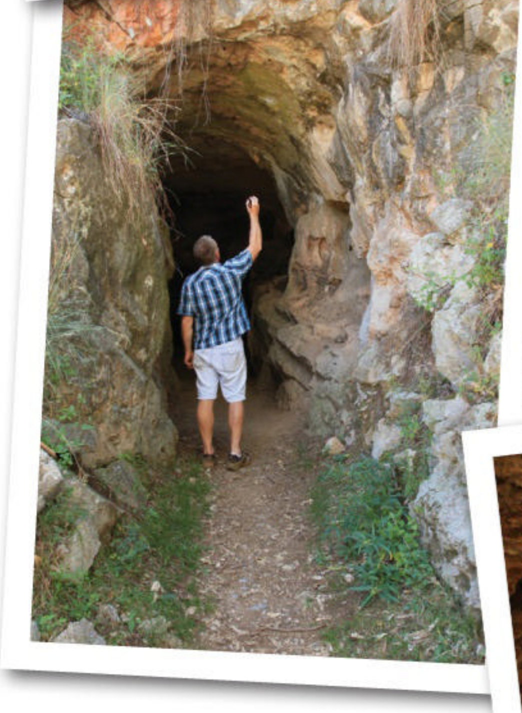
Located 80km north of Inverell, Kwiambal is a serene and peaceful place where European history dates back to 1827. Explorer and botanist Allan Cunningham, known for his expeditions along the eastern seaboard into uncolonised areas, ventured through north-west NSW that year. He was collecting plant species north of Inverell in what was thought to be an uninhabited area, but instead discovered a squatter's shack and cattle near what is now the township of Ashford. By 1830 settlers had begun arriving on the north-west slopes, and Ashford was declared a village in 1860.

I first visited Kwiambal nearly 10

SR 36 WALLANGRA RD
SANDY CREEK RD
KWIAMBAL NATIONAL PARK
MACINTYRE FALLS
LIMESTONE CAVES
17 ASHFORD
WALLANGRA 6

Old tobacco shed





LIMESTONE CAVE

ONE OF THE MAIN ATTRACTIONS IN KWIAMBAL IS THE LIMESTONE CAVES, WHICH WERE ONCE MINED FOR BAT POO – OR GUANO

years ago and was keen to return for some time out and a chance to reconnect with nature. After a quick stop in Ashford, it's only a 30-minute drive to the park's boundary. Tobacco farming was a major industry out here between 1969 and 1994, and if you look around you'll still see a few of the old drying sheds – most now used for farm storage – built from cypress and ironbark. Unfortunately, there's still plenty of prickly pear cactus about; even Allan Cunningham noted during his explorations that it was once so thick it couldn't be walked through.

One of the main attractions in Kwiambal is the limestone caves, which were once mined for bat poo – or guano – that's rich in phosphorus and nitrogen. Just near the cave entrance, information boards highlight Allan Cunningham's travels as well as the history of the caves and the mining era. It's only a 300m walk from the car park to the cave entrance and day picnic area, where you'll find toilets, shelters, a few tables and plenty of open paddocks for the kids to run around. Around the cave entrance and along some of the park roads, you can spot fossils that look like gigantic worm grooves – these are called Rillenkarren and were formed over millions of years as acid rainwater ran down the limestone, carving these

The Limestone Caves Walking Track
The Limestone Caves
Grade 2 moderate
500m, 20min return
The Limestone Caves
Picnic Area
Grade 2 moderate
Limestone Creek
Disabled Parking
60m

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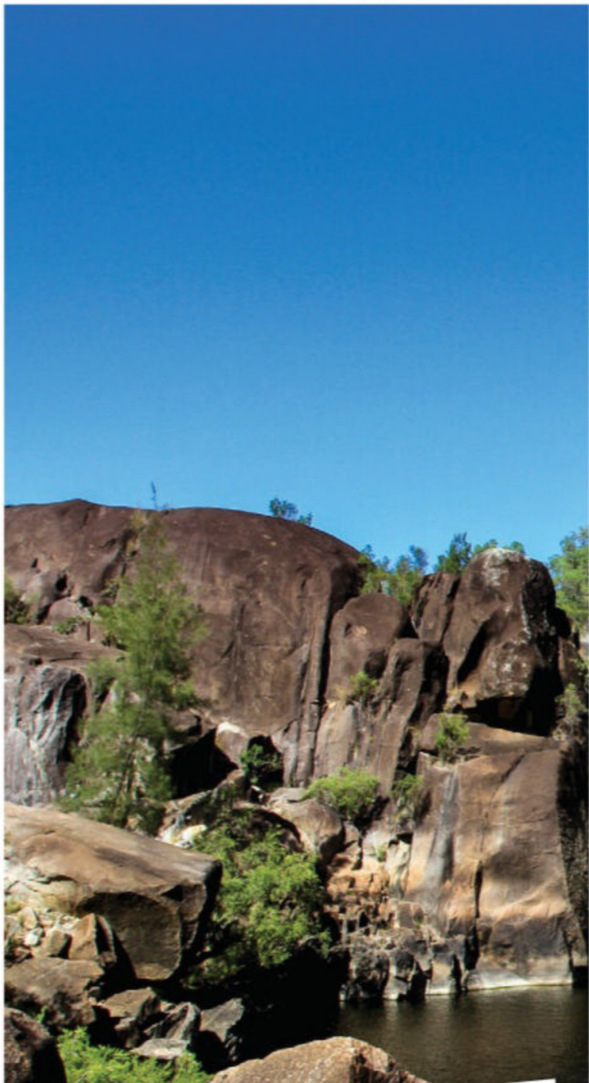
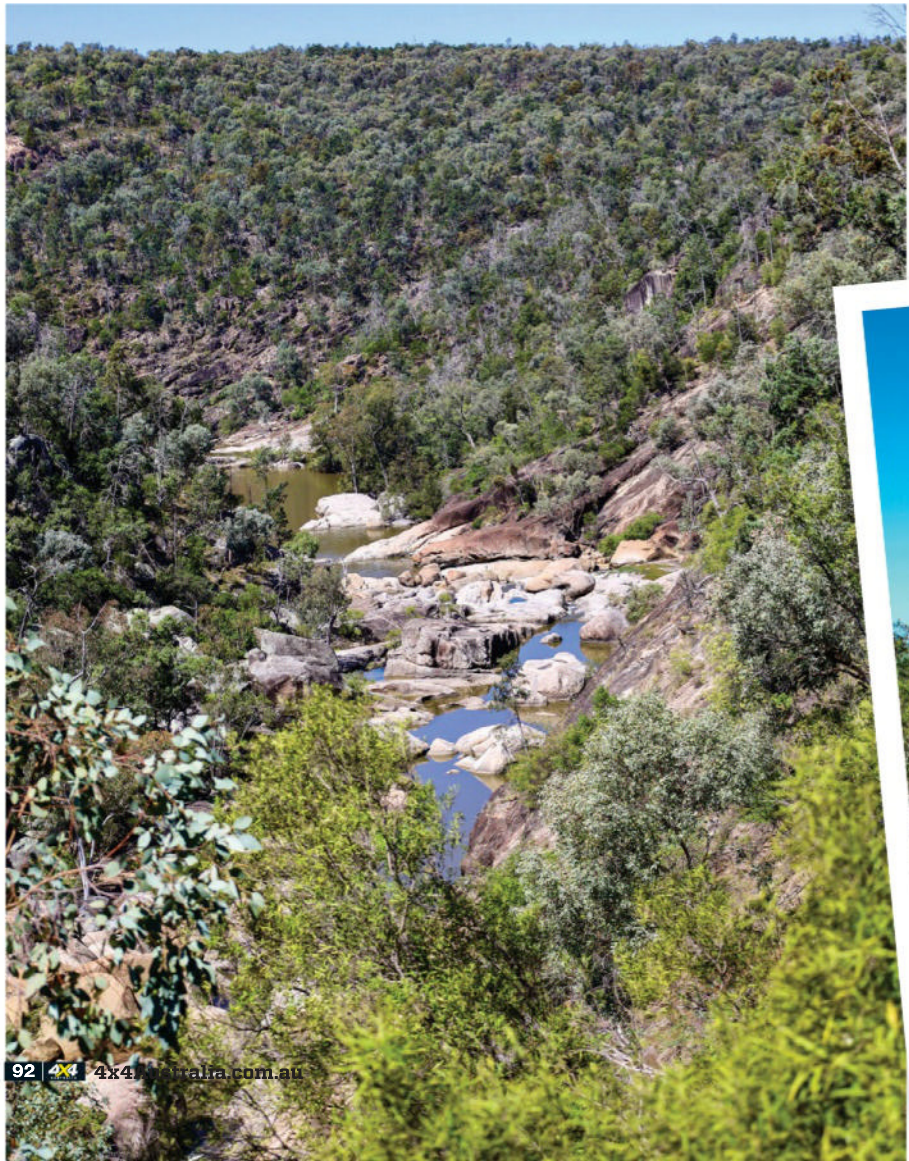
unusual channels.

With a good torch, it's possible to safely explore the cave system, where you'll find huge chambers and lengthy hallway-like passages. Some pathways lead to smaller rooms, while others open into vast caverns. Look closely and you'll spot stalactites and stalagmites, and in some of the quieter caves, tiny bats cling tightly to the roof. Just remember your route – there are no markers or formed trails – and if your torch goes out, it's dark – very dark. The signs outside estimate around two kilometres of cave system that most people can explore, with a further three kilometres accessible only with specialised equipment.

Fossils and bones found around the limestone cave system date back to the Pleistocene era (11,000 to 2.5 million years ago), and surprisingly they include a pygmy possum, giant kangaroos and a thylacine.

Another major drawcard at Kwiambal is Macintyre Falls and the network of walking tracks leading to areas known as the Pools, the Beach, Slippery Rocks and the Gorge. There are viewing platforms for those who can't or don't want to hike to the bottom, offering different perspectives of the rugged terrain, the Macintyre River and the sheer scale of the granite gorges. In the warmer months, hikers arwe rewarded with a refreshing swim in the waterholes scattered throughout the lower gorge. At the trailhead to the falls, there are





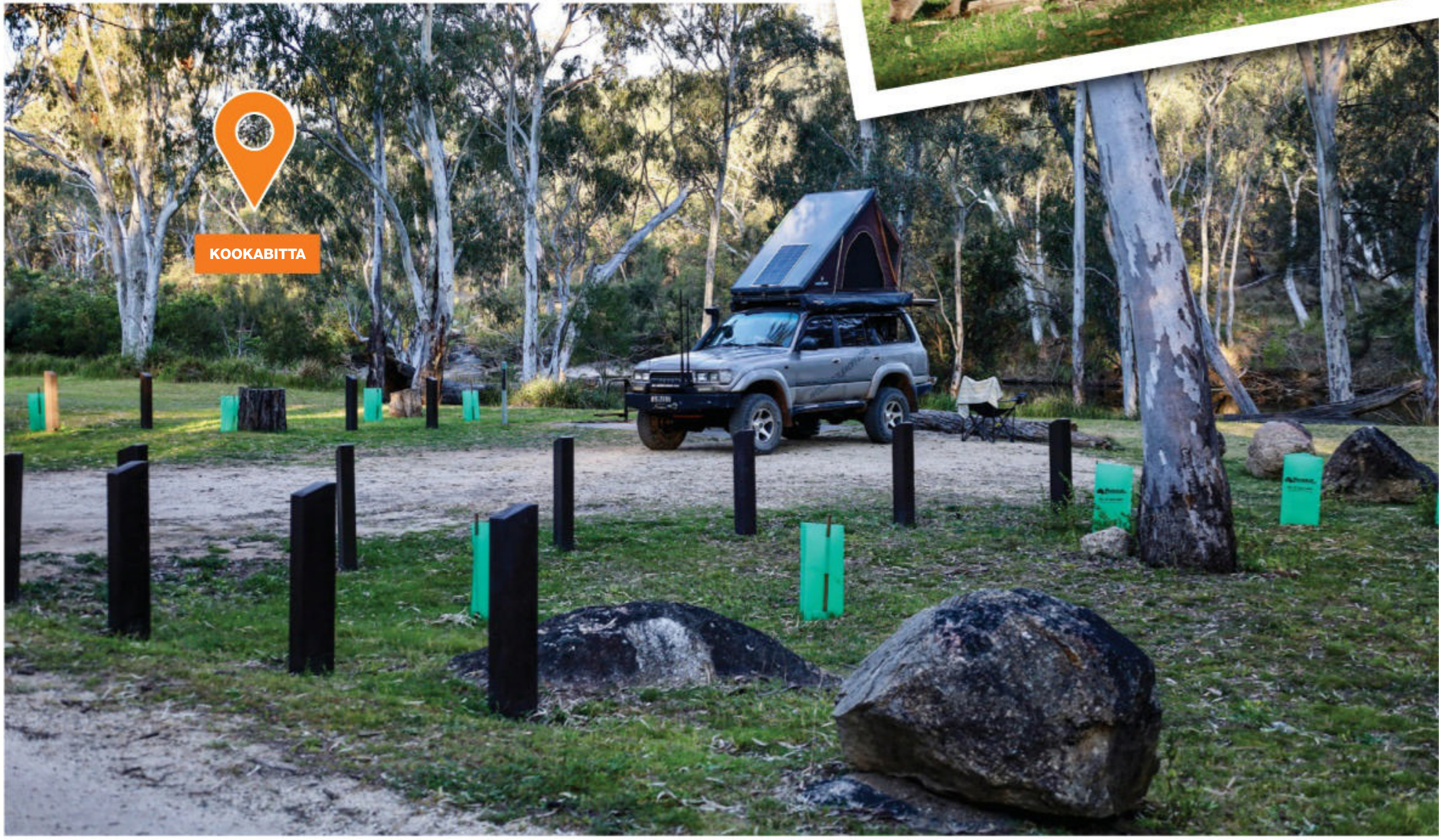
MACINTYRE FALLS

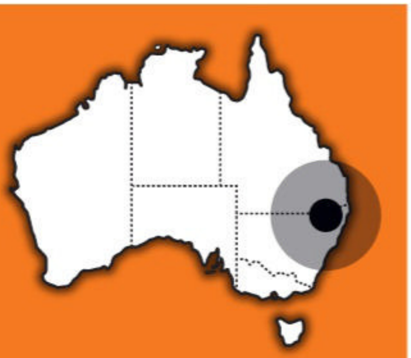
IN THE WARMER MONTHS, HIKERS ARE REWARDED WITH A REFRESHING SWIM IN THE WATERHOLES SCATTERED THROUGHOUT THE LOWER GORGE

toilets, shelters and barbecues for day trippers.

There are two camping areas in Kwiambal – Lemon Tree Flat and Kookabitta – both set along the Severn River. As usual, bookings are made online, and both times I've visited, Lemon Tree has booked out fast. There are only a few sites at Kookabitta, suitable for all styles of camping – from swags and rooftop tents to off-road trailers. Both camps are well set up with drop toilets, barbecue shelters and tables, while Kookabitta sites also have their own picnic table and fire pit. Walking tracks connect the two campgrounds, and Lemon Tree offers the Junction Walk, which leads past the Dungeon Lookout to where the Severn and Macintyre rivers meet. Both sites have river access and make for peaceful camps where birdlife and wildlife come down to drink. The big grassy area at Kookabitta attracts wallabies in the afternoon, creating a beautiful setting against the wild hills behind camp.

Even though Kwiambal is small and all about getting back to nature, I'm a big fan of the place – its serenity and peaceful surroundings are what make it so special. For those keen to throw on a pair of hiking boots, there's enough here to keep you busy for days.





KWIAMBAL NP, NSW

FACT FILE

WHERE IS KWIAMBAL

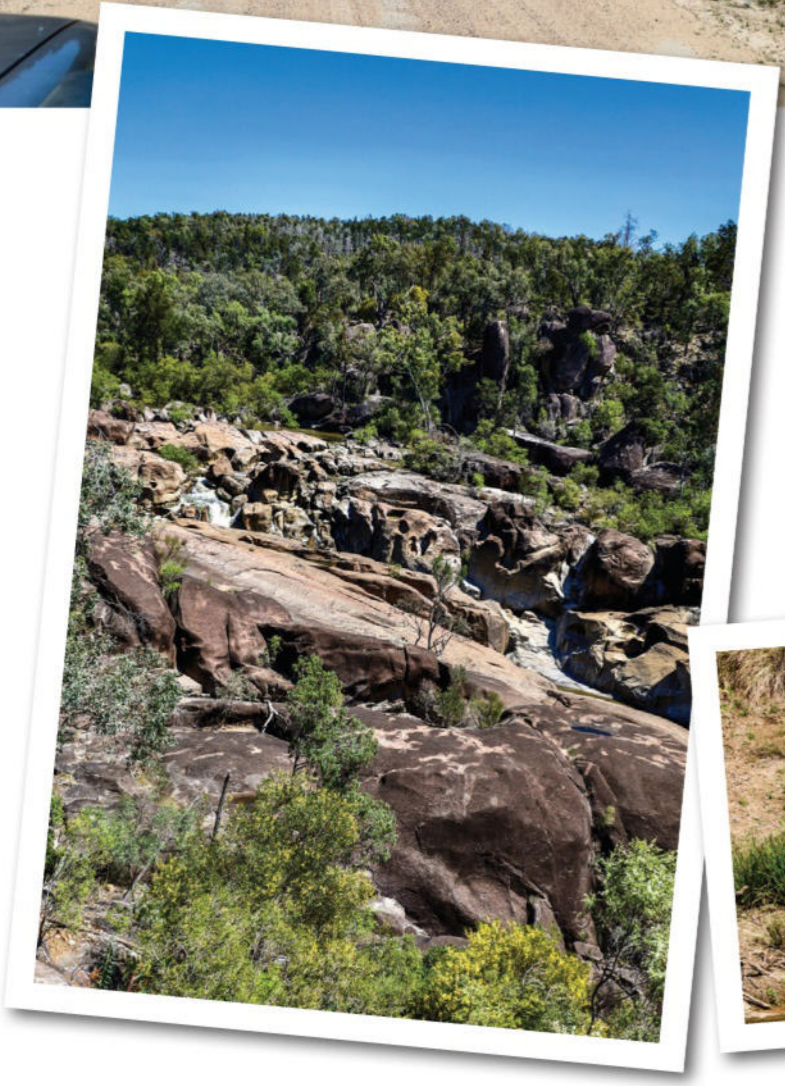
Kwiambal National Park is located 80km north of Inverell, via Ashford in northern NSW. Set in rugged, remote gorge country, it's an area rich in both cultural and historical heritage.

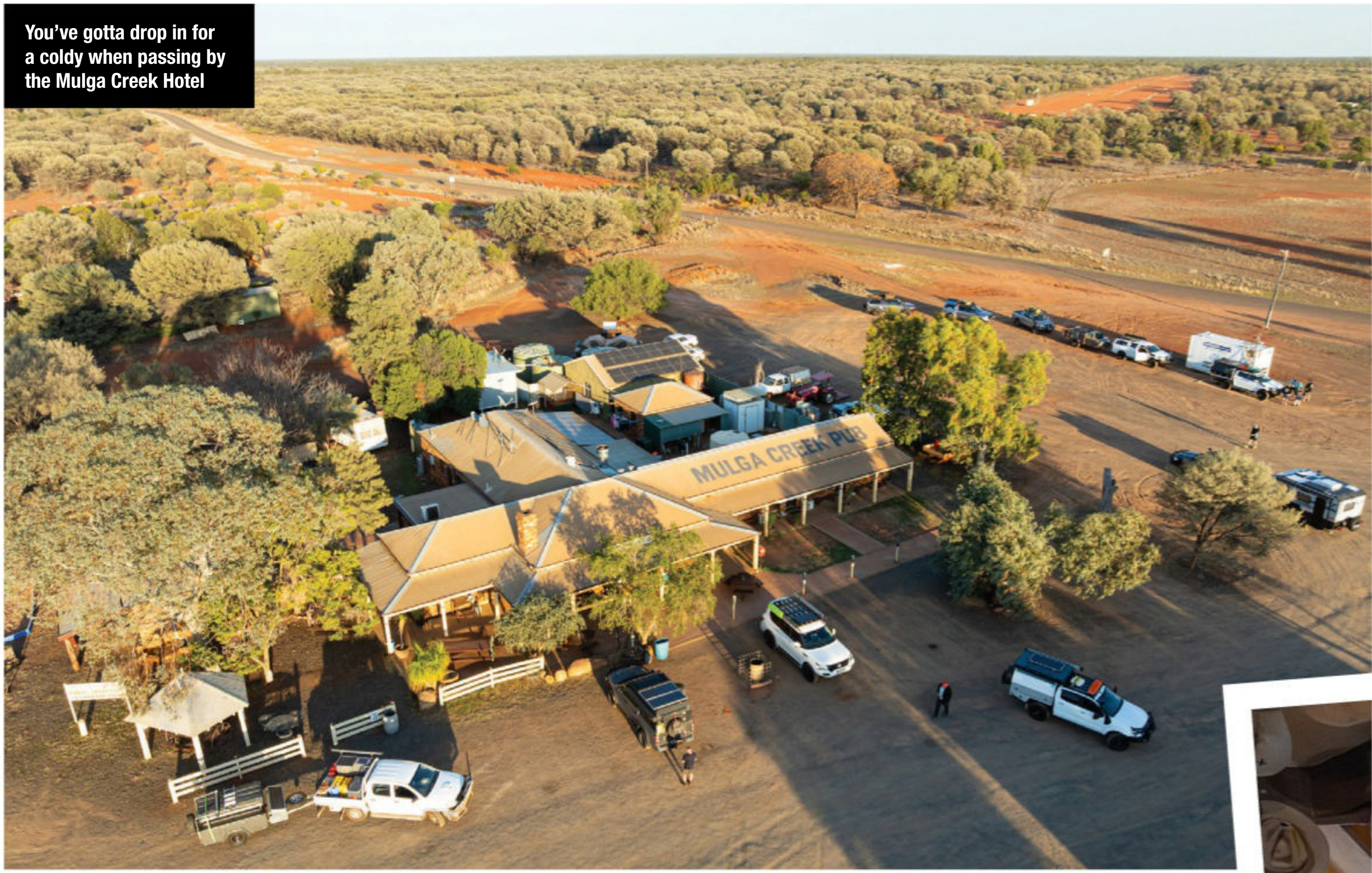
WHAT TO SEE AND DO

There are two camping areas to set up base – Lemon Tree and Kookabitta – both with essential facilities. Bookings are now made online through the NPWS website. Kwiambal is a hiker's delight, with plenty of trails to test your fitness, along with waterfalls, swimming holes and picnic spots to enjoy at day's end. On the park's outer reaches, you'll spot old tobacco sheds in paddocks once used to dry the crop.

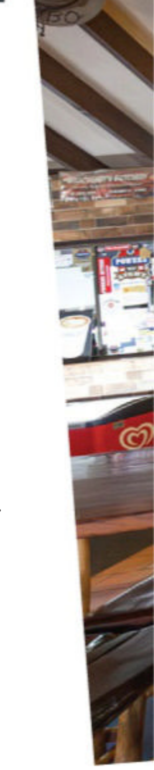
OTHER INFO

The NSW NPWS website (www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/visit-a-park/parks/kwiambal-national-park) has the most up-to-date park information and online bookings. The best time to explore Kwiambal is during spring, when wildflowers bloom and the weather is kinder. Summer and winter temperatures can be extreme, so come prepared if you're visiting in those seasons.





You've gotta drop in for a coldy when passing by the Mulga Creek Hotel



MULGA MAGIC

OUT ON THE LONG STRETCH BETWEEN NYNGAN AND BOURKE, ONE PUB STANDS ALONE: THE MULGA CREEK HOTEL, WHERE COLD BEER AND WARM HOSPITALITY NEVER RUN DRY

WORDS AND PHOTOS GLENN MARSHALL

If you look at a map of western New South Wales, you'll find Byrock marked neatly between Nyngan and Bourke on the Mitchell Highway. But search for the town itself and you'll be hard-pressed to find much more than a single landmark: the Mulga Creek Hotel. In truth, Byrock and the pub are one and the same. This humble watering hole is the last surviving reminder of a once-busy staging post, and today it stands proudly as a beacon of hospitality in a harsh but beautiful landscape.

Back in the late 1800s, Byrock was alive with movement and noise. Cobb & Co coaches rattled through on their way between Bourke, Brewarrina and Cobar. The settlement boasted three pubs, a police station, a telegraph office and, later, a railway siding. Drovers, shearers, stockmen and coach passengers all stopped here for a meal, a bed or a stiff drink before pressing on into the outback.

But like many country towns, Byrock began to fade when the coaches stopped running and transport routes shifted. People moved away, the buildings closed and the town all but disappeared. Today, only the Mulga Creek Hotel remains – a solitary building that carries the spirit of Byrock forward. It's both pub and caravan park, dining room and history lesson, and a reminder of how important these outposts have always been for those travelling the long, lonely roads of western NSW.

While the history is fascinating, the Mulga Creek Hotel is far from a dusty relic. The pub has recently been taken over by Brodie and Megan, a young couple who saw its potential to breathe new life into this historic stop. They've thrown themselves into the challenge with energy and passion, keeping its character intact while adding a welcoming warmth that makes travellers feel right at home.

For Brodie and Megan, it's about more than running a business; it's about preserving a piece of outback history and ensuring the Mulga Creek Hotel remains a vital stop for the next generation of explorers. Their fresh approach blends traditional country hospitality with a modern sense of community – and it's evident the moment you step through the door.

Despite its remote location, the Mulga Creek Hotel offers everything you need to rest and recharge.

Simple, comfortable and air-conditioned – perfect for a quiet night off the road.

CARAVAN & CAMPING: Powered and unpowered sites are available, with clean showers, toilets and a camp kitchen. There's plenty of space to roll out the swag if you'd rather sleep under the stars.

BAR & DINING: Cold beer on tap, a pool table for a friendly challenge, and hearty meals that hit the spot. Steaks, schnitzels, burgers and daily specials make up the menu – and the portions are generous.

EXTRAS: Barbecue facilities, laundry, a kids' playground and a firepit out the front where stories flow as easily as the drinks.

It's no five-star resort… and it doesn't pretend to be. What you'll find instead is clean, practical accommodation, good food and a genuine outback welcome.

On the Mitchell Highway, the long stretches between towns can be tough going. Fuel stops, food and accommodation are spaced far apart, so places like the Mulga Creek Hotel are essential. But this pub offers more than just a practical break.

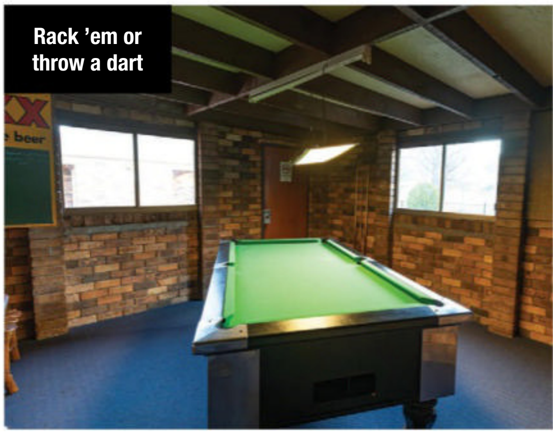
FUEL: Diesel is available at the card-only pump out the front of the hotel.

HOSPITALITY: Brodie and Megan's energy shines through in every meal served and every story shared over the bar.

BASECAMP: From here, you can head into Gundabooka National Park, explore Bourke's historic attractions, or simply break the journey between Nyngan and Bourke.

What makes the Mulga Creek Hotel truly special is the experience of staying there. Pull up a chair in the bar and you'll soon find yourself chatting with truck drivers, grey nomads, station workers and fellow adventurers. Step out to the firepit and you'll sit beneath a sky that feels impossibly vast, the Milky Way stretching overhead in dazzling clarity.

BYROCK
MULGA CREEK HOTEL
EST. 1884
DROVERS RUN



Rack 'em or throw a dart

There are powered and unpowered sites available

It's a simple place, but one that leaves a deep impression. The longer you linger, the more you appreciate that pubs like this aren't just places to eat and drink – they're vital lifelines connecting people across a vast and sometimes unforgiving landscape.

The Mulga Creek Hotel may be the last piece of Byrock still standing, but thanks to Brodie and Megan it's far from the end of the story. Their enthusiasm is infectious, and their commitment to keeping the doors open ensures this outback pub remains a fixture for years to come.

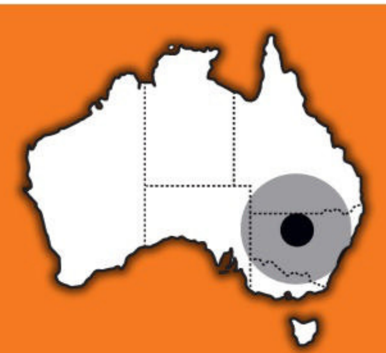
For travellers, Brodie and Megan's committment means a place to rest, refuel and reconnect – both with history and with each other.

The Mulga Creek Hotel is more than just a pub; it's an outback institution – and the local post office.

With a proud history dating back to the Cobb & Co days and a bright future in the hands of its young new owners, the Mulga Creek Hotel is a stop every traveller should make. Whether you're camping under the stars, booking a room for the night or just pulling in for a cold beer and a hot meal, you'll find yourself part of Byrock's story – even if only for a night.

> TODAY, ONLY THE MULGA CREEK HOTEL REMAINS – A SOLITARY BUILDING THAT CARRIES THE SPIRIT OF BYROCK FORWARD

The pub is also the post office… and has a couple of motel rooms, too



MULGA CREEK HOTEL

FAST FACTS

LOCATION
Mitchell Highway, Byrock NSW 2831

PHONE (02) 6874 7311

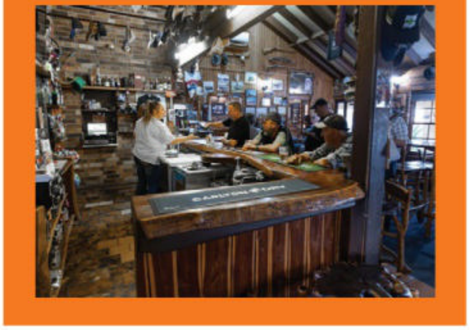
EMAIL mulgacreekhotel@gmail.com

BEERS
Behind the bar you'll find a solid line-up of popular brews on tap – Great Northern Super Crisp, VB, Tooheys Old and Carlton Dry. The fridges are stocked with beer cans and stubbies, as well as RTDs and soft drinks. Wine drinkers are looked after too, with a small but tidy list of Aussie reds and crisp whites, and there's a good range of spirits for those who like to finish the night with something a little stronger.

FOOD HIGHLIGHTS
Classic pub feeds are the go here, with chicken parma or schnitzel, scotch fillet and T-bone steaks cooked just how you like them, battered flathead and homemade burgers stacked high and messy. If you're lucky, there might be a roast of the day on the specials board. All meals come with salad and chips, and the kids have some good options too.

Meals are served from 12pm to 2pm and 6pm to 8.30pm, seven days a week.

PUB RATING: ★★★★☆



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GVM upgrades for full-size rigs

HOW TO GET MAXIMUM CARRYING AND TOWING CAPACITY OUT OF YOUR 4X4 WITHOUT NEEDING A TRUCK LICENCE

On a global scale, full-size rigs are big business for auto manufacturers. All over North America you can't spit without hitting an F-Truck, RAM, GMC or Toyota Tundra (and probably get yourself a black eye for your trouble). Despite being comparatively ungainly, this popularity for big rigs with big engines, big frames and big load capacities makes a lot of sense. Our American cousins tow fifth-wheeler caravans, boats the size of a cruise ship, and multiple vehicle trailers for their toys. In other words, they like to party.

And so do we.

More and more Australians are coming to the 'carrying heavy weight' party. Who doesn't love the convenience of having a full bathroom, enough water to fill a dam, a full laundry and the tinny on the roof of the van? It makes for comfort, convenience and one hell of an adventure. But it all costs weight.

This means it's not too difficult to have a set-up that a stock Cruiser or midsize dual-cab won't be able to legally pull, and even if it does it won't be happy about it. You need something bigger. You need a full-size.

We're talking Chevrolet Silverado, RAM, Ford F-Series and even the Toyota Tundra. All vehicles built to haul heavy while providing safety, comfort and a bunch of leftover carrying capacity for a family of five and their dog.

The full-size difference

Full-size utes (or trucks, if we're using the culturally accurate term) are the same as the midsize utes we're used to; they're just around 30 per cent bigger. Bigger chassis rails, bigger diffs, bigger bodies, bigger interiors and bigger dimensions. But crucially, they can also tow and carry more. Or so you'd think.

While the towing capacities come in at a beefy 4500kg (or a full 1000kg more than your HiLux), the payloads are not that crash hot. They range from 700-800kg, which is less than most midsize utes. And that's the main problem with these rigs. Folks grab them thinking they've bought something that can be loaded to the brim and never be over the limit. However, the reality is that due to a variety of reasons, we actually get de-rated versions of full-size rigs that may be able to tow a heavy trailer, but at the expense of payload capacity, increased wear and tear on undersized driveline and suspension components and, ultimately, safety. Pretty ordinary really.

APEX
SHOCKS

TSA custom made components allow drivers to get the most out of their full-size 4x4 rigs

www.touringsolutionsaustralia
TOURING SOLUTIONS AUSTRALIA
www.touringsolutionsaustralia.com.au
972 EG8

TSA's suspension and GVM upgrades are just as applicable to full-size 4x4 wagons like the Nissan Patrol and LC300

The need for more

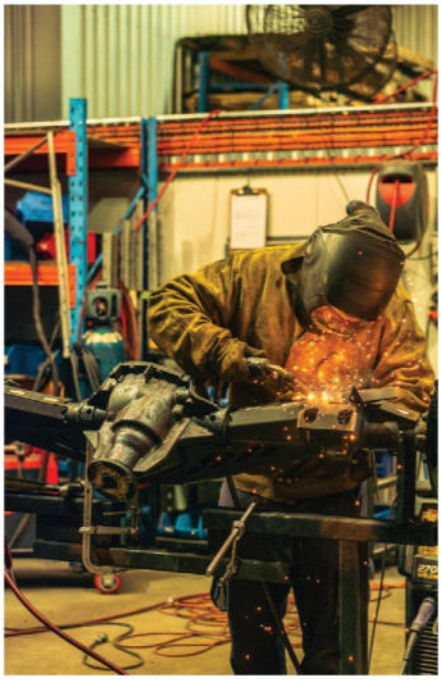
Nobody buys a full-size truck for a commuter or because of their frugal fuel use or because they're a delight to park – they buy them to tow and carry heavy gear. That's it. However, anything with a GVM of over 4500kg requires a truck licence (not to mention insurance and general lifestyle adjustments), and while the brochure says they can tow that, it does come at the expense of payload.

This means that full-size rigs need a GVM upgrade if you want to use them to their full potential, which is kind of the point of buying one in the first place. Luckily, we live in a country with a bunch of clever companies that know how to get these things functioning at the level they should be. More payload, better suspension, increased comfort and safety and with full road-going legality. It's not just a set of heavier-rated springs and stiffer shocks either – these kits are a comprehensive upgrade that beef up everything from your diffs to your frame rails to your shock absorbers and give you truck-like carrying and towing capacities without the need for licence upgrades or having to learn how to back up a B-double. Most importantly, they allow your brand-spanking full-size truck to be used as it should be.

The lowdon on GVM Upgrades

We had a chat with Jon Blewett from Touring Solutions Australia, a company that has arguably the most comprehensive GVM kits for full-size rigs on the market. They start by running a complete 3D scan of the vehicle to assess any weaknesses with the existing frame, suspension and diffs and develop the kits holistically around the areas that need addressing while building in extra support and strengthening the stress points.

From there, the kits are put through a rigorous testing procedure that actually takes the products well beyond the technical requirements laid out by the ADRs. With extensive data analysis and testing the kits are cleared for Second Stage Manufacturer (SSM) registration and, in some cases, they can be fitted after registration and retroactively certified for road use.



Touring Solutions Australia has built its own fully adjustable and rebuildable Apex shock absorbers from the ground up

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Aussie suitability

Touring Solutions Australia doesn't do anything by half – its GVM upgrades will not only handle the Aussie conditions that we all know and love, the same conditions that straight up murder under-engineered gear quickly and mercilessly, but will likely survive a direct hit with a bazooka they're that well engineered.

For starters, they design and manufacture their own hubs in-house. The new hubs feature upgraded bearings and races (Jon reckons the stock bearings on some of the diffs, RAM we're looking your way, are woefully undersized) and turn the diffs into fully floating assemblies – which are much stronger than the factory set-up. This means that the diffs have a higher axle load rating and are much more capable of supporting heavy loads without wearing out faster than a reality TV star's acting career. And they can pre-engineer vehicles with a 35-inch tyre, which we'll always be fans of.

It's not only frame and diff housing upgrades. Touring Solutions Australia has even gone a step further with its line of Apex shock absorbers. Think of your standard high-end shock – Fox, King, ADS etc. – and how they're valved. They're built for high articulation and going fast over rough terrain. What they're not valved or really designed for is supporting heavy weights. Touring Solutions Australia has built its own fully adjustable and rebuildable Apex shock absorbers from the ground up to support the kinds of weights a full-size rig will see. They're a true built-for-purpose component of the suspension system, designed and valved exactly for your specific needs for an amazing ride fully loaded over gnarly terrain. You can't tell us that's not cool.

APEX
On Track

TSA's replacment upper control arms are load rated to match the increased GVM of the vehicle

TSA' adjustable shocks are developed in-house to suit the respective packages

Of course, there's a lot more that goes into these GVM kits that we can fit here. Jon told us all about the company's upper control arms that are the only ones on the market that are actually load rated and how Touring Solutions Australia's combination of CAD and real-world design means you're getting one massively comprehensive GVM upgrade that has more options than Sizzler's all-you-can-eat buffet. Oh, and there are also kits for Patrols and Cruisers if that's your jam.

The meat of it is this: with plenty of experience off the blacktop and by manufacturing heavy duty replacement parts in-house, you know you're getting the best possible kit by going with Touring Solutions Australia. If you're chasing the nicest upgrade for your expensive full-size rig, and want to use it to its full potential, then make sure to get in touch with the guys today.

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TACMED AUSTRALIA
TRAUMA KIT

FIELD READY FIRST AID

A QUALITY FIRST-AID KIT IS ESSENTIAL FOR ANY REMOTE TRIP. TACMED'S VEHICLE TRAUMA KIT DRAWS ON THE BRAND'S EMERGENCY-SERVICE EXPERTISE TO DELIVER PROFESSIONAL-GRADE GEAR FOR TRAVELLERS

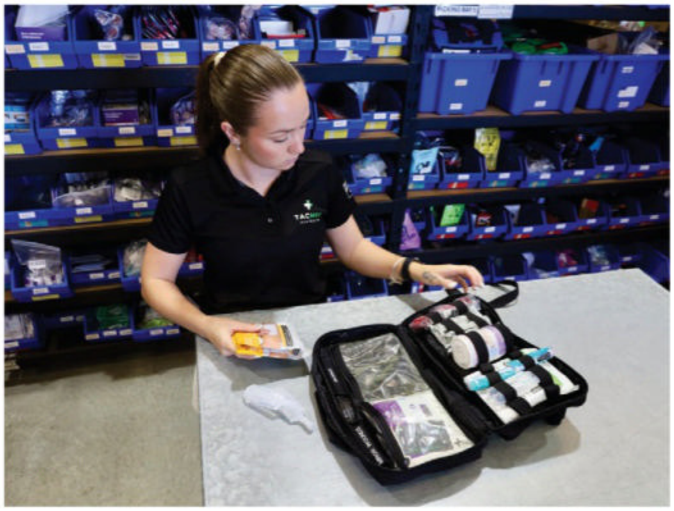
WORDS AND PHOTOS KEV SMITH

One of the most quintessential items that a four-wheel driver, or in fact anyone, should have is a decent first-aid kit. There are dozens on the market, and you can pick one up from a chain store, discount shop, online, or just about anywhere. But which one is right, and do they all do the same job?

Being on the road most days of the year – exploring remote destinations, hiking, and spending time outdoors – means I prefer to have a decent kit. My go-to for years has been a bag full of the right gear from Tacmed, based in Coffs Harbour.

Tacmed began more than 10 years ago when owner Jeremy Holder (Jez to his mates) transitioned from the Army, where he served in Special Operations as a medic in various hotspots around the world. After leaving the Army, he joined the ambulance service as an intensive care paramedic. Needless to say, Jez has seen the worst of the worst.

Not only do they now supply government agencies such as Fire and Rescue, the military, law enforcement, Surf Life



TACMED AUSTRALIA
TRAUMA KIT

Saving, NPWS and St John Ambulance, but the general public can also buy directly from them. They offer a wide range of first-aid kits, and if they don't have exactly what you need, they can custom-build one or source specialised items for you.

The team at Tacmed has decades of experience across the military, paramedic and rescue industries, and the kits and services they provide are built to save lives.

I've been carrying a Tacmed Vehicle Trauma Kit for a few years now, and even though the bag has seen better days, I know that what's inside could save my life – or better still, someone else's. Why this one? Well, it was designed by the team at Tacmed as an adventurer's kit, housed in a tough, US-made Conterra bag and packed with everything you'd need – from treating a small scratch through to a major wound, snakebite bandages, burn dressings and even a SAM splint. Over the years I've used a few of the smaller items, and Tacmed offers refills and replacement components to make restocking easy. If you need to top up any kit, it's as simple as jumping onto their website to place an order or sending them a quick message.

They recommend checking your kit every 12 months, especially in harsher conditions where dust and moisture can affect consumable items. All of Tacmed's kits are designed for critical emergencies and use the same equipment trusted by military medics, paramedics and emergency responders. Each kit is built for rapid deployment in life-threatening situations where seconds matter.

Not only does Tacmed sell high-end products, but its training is second to none across Australia. The company runs accredited programs, custom courses, and public training sessions. From the AFP, NPWS and NSW Police to Tasmanian Parks and Surfing NSW, they train the best of the best to keep people safe and alive when disaster strikes. Their training programs cover everything from Tactical First Aid and major bleeding control to workplace accidents, CPR, remote care and high-risk medic-level response. While most of these courses and training packages are beyond the reach of the average four-wheel driver, it's good to know that Tacmed practices what it preaches.

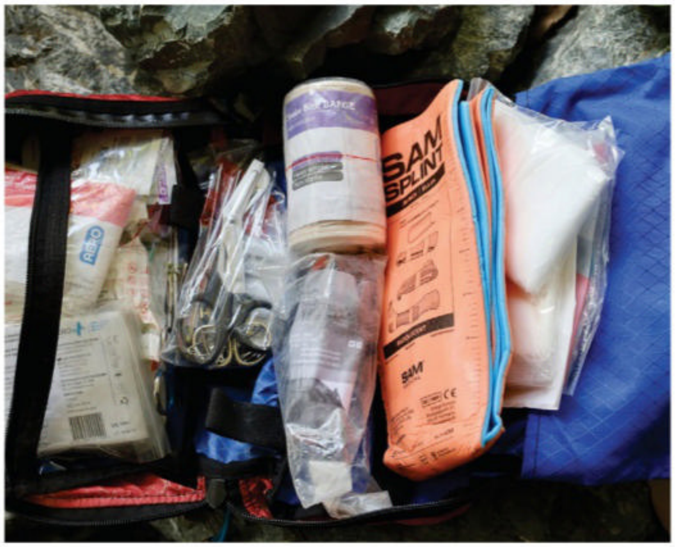
Tacmed's website is a wealth of knowledge, packed with relevant information and everything you need to know about first aid – from workplace accidents to bleeding control. Online, they also maintain active social media pages and a YouTube channel that provide even more useful content.

RATED

RRP: From $319.95 (Vehicle Trauma Kit)

AVAILABLE FROM:
tacmedaustralia.com.au

WE SAY: Built on real-world experience, Tacmed's gear is tough, trusted and made to perform when it counts – serious first-aid for serious adventurers.



FLIGHT OF THE FALKEN

WE SUBJECT THE NEW FALKEN AT4 TYRES TO A 10,000KM TORTURE TEST TO CAPE YORK AND BACK

WORDS AND PHOTOS MARK ALLEN

To the Cape and back.

Yes, Cape York – the very tip of Australia.

That's almost 10,000km return from home, across every terrain imaginable: bitumen, sand, mud, rock and slop, and in very high temperatures. Tree roots and jagged rocks attacking the sidewalls and trying to pierce the tread, and the 4.2-tonne GVM maxed out, giving the Falkens hell and mashing them into Mother Earth.

From walking pace to 110km/h; from bone-dry dust to slippery wet bitumen.

This is one tyre test that'll either make or break the new-to-Australia Falken AT4 rubber.

AT3 TO AT4 – WHY?

I'd had the well-renowned Falken AT3s on our 4x4-converted HiAce for well over a year, clocking up around 15,000km across varied terrain without mishap or fault, and I'd been extremely happy with them – much like many other owners who swear by their Falkens.

So, to switch to an unknown tyre just weeks out from a major trip was a big risk. So many what-ifs, so many thoughts

about what might fail. But hey, you only get one life – and pushing products to their limits, all in the name of testing, sure beats wondering about the adventures I might have missed.

So, off with the 'Threes' and on with the 'Fours', in the same dimensions (265/70R17), to test a tyre that wasn't even due for its official release for another five months.

THE DIFFERENCES

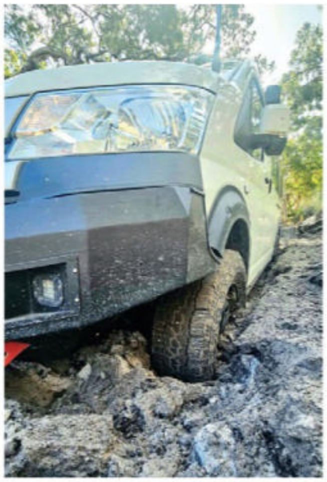
Aside from the 'three' being swapped for a 'four' on the sidewall of the new tyres, many wouldn't immediately notice the outward visual differences between the two. Of course, there's no guessing the changes made beneath the surface – and those upgrades represent a significant step up from the outgoing design, making the new Falken AT4 a world-class tyre, one that'll be hard to beat in any arena.

The tread pattern, while different, remains very similar to the AT3. In fact, many people who looked at our van didn't pick the new rubber until they spotted AT4 moulded into the sidewall, did a double-take, and asked how the hell we already had these tyres in Australia.

While the tread pattern still carries the familiar interlocking C and S shapes, it's been subtly redesigned with wider and deeper primary and outer blocks that should perform well in mud, rocks and other terrain where firm obstacles protrude from the track surface. Full-depth sipes allow greater water dispersion on the road throughout the tyre's life, while the more rigid tread and strengthened carcass improve heavy-load carrying and towing characteristics. The reduced tyre squirm also keeps the whole show rolling true. I particularly noticed this difference on our high-duty, heavily loaded 4x4 HiAce compared with the outgoing rubber.

The three-ply DuraSpec sidewall (on most sizes) is the standout and most anticipated upgrade on the new Falkens. This boost in built-in toughness proved its worth throughout our trip to the Cape, where we scraped more than our fair share of rocks and tree roots along rugged tracks – showing that the team's design criteria not only met but exceeded real-world abuse and testing.

Since returning, I've washed the red dirt and mud from every inch of the HiAce and inspected the paint, panels, mechanicals and tyres for damage. I'd give the tyres a 9.5 out of 10 for the minimal damage sustained over our 10,000km test. There's one small section of raised lettering on the front-right tyre that's copped a nasty scuff from a sharp rock and is slightly damaged – but that's a testament to the improved design and strength of these tyres. It wasn't lacerated or punctured, as a lesser sidewall construction likely would've been. I also noted a few light scratches and abrasions in the tread blocks, but given the punishment these tyres have taken, that's still a far better result than many others would deliver.



No, they're not muddies, but we gave them one hell of a test in the goo

As for increased noise, despite the slightly more aggressive tread blocks, you'd be hard-pressed to notice any difference.

The AT4s are certainly firmer, thanks to their sturdier construction, but that's something I welcome in spades. Don't get too caught up thinking that extra firmness will affect ride quality or on-road grip – most drivers wouldn't notice much change. While that added rigidity is most apparent in the improved handling of a high-centred 4x4, I'll take it any day for the extra control these tyres deliver.

Aside from the rugged tracks and searing heat we faced across almost every type of terrain, we also found ourselves weaving along long stretches of wet, cold bitumen that climbed into the mountains as we chased waterfalls through the hinterland. To my surprise, the AT4s handled those atrocious conditions exceptionally well.

WRAP UP

Try as I might, I can't find a bad word to say about the new and improved Falken AT4s. Noise, puncture resistance, handling on our heavy 4x4-converted HiAce, and performance across all surfaces – on-road and off – have been superb. The four tyres in use show around 1mm less tread depth than the unused spare. There's no point trying to extrapolate tyre life from that, but it certainly suggests a healthy lifespan, which will obviously vary depending on use.

Do yourself a favour next time you're in the market for new all-terrain tyres and check them out. Don't think for a second you'll be comparing these Falkens to the big-name brands — they are a big-name brand. Prices will, of course, vary depending on the size you're after.

Thanks to Falken for trusting us with a pre-release set of tyres on such a demanding run to the top of Australia and back – nearly 10,000km all up – and the AT4s handled everything superbly. This wasn't a one-week play on a few dirt tracks and a run to the local shopping centre; it was a full-on torture test that delivered exactly what we all want to know – can the product survive? The answer is a resounding yes: the Falken AT4 has conquered the Cape.

RATED

RRP: Size dependent

AVAILABLE FROM:
www.falken.com.au

WE SAY: A seriously tough all-terrain that proved itself the hard way – from bitumen to bulldust and everything in between. Quiet, grippy, and impressively durable, the AT4 more than earns its stripes.

The AT4 offers a similar tread pattern to the AT3

SC-V-USB-01
SC-V-DC1
SC-V-S3

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THIS MONTH WE TALK TO

TERRAIN TAMER

BE ORD
4WD
PARTS &
ESSORIES

Describe your business

Terrain Tamer is a range of 4WD Parts, manufactured by Original Equipment Manufacturers to be stronger than the original or easier to instal as a kit or assembled unit.

Suspension, Brake, Filtration, Bearing Kits, Clutch, Driveline are all designed and manufactured to be stronger, safer, and last longer. Our Head Office in Melbourne is significant in size and holds over 60,000 lines on the shelf.

Tell us some of the history of the company

Established in 1969, our parts were originally designed to help the tour operators who took tour groups into outback Australia using Bedford, Leyland and Land Rover vehicles. As they broke down, which was incredibly dangerous, they would come to see Frank, our founder, who would modify parts or source stronger parts from overseas. In the 1970s we moved into LandCruiser and HiLux vehicle applications, and now across the many popular 4WD applications such as Ford Ranger, Nissan Navara and Patrol, Isuzu D-MAX and Mazda BT-50. Gradually, part by part, 55 years later, Terrain Tamer is sought after all over the world for these innovations.

TERRAIN TAMER
HEAVY DUTY
BEARING KIT

Where is the company now at

It has been an incredible journey, as we have taken our range to key markets globally over the last 40 years. Almost half our branches are now overseas in Europe, Africa, South America, NZ, PNG, Fiji, and we are very excited to now say North America.

The release of innovative parts has not slowed down, with over 2000 lines released in the last 12 months. Some of these have won innovation awards and some are relied on by Australia's largest companies, such as BHP.

What is unique about your product

We would humbly suggest that Terrain Tamer is the only true 4WD parts specialist in the world. Not accessories like bullbars, but 4WD parts that run the vehicle. We say this because we control the design, the manufacture and the distribution of the Terrain Tamer range.

Then there is the incredibly important skill of Parts Interpreting that completes each transaction. All these key aspects have taken us 55 years to create and ultimately generate a very different customer experience, compared to a general parts trader, who simply buys and sells.

If you could say two words about your product / service what would it be

Personally responsible.

What makes you different from your competition

Our 4WD Test Track at Head Office symbolises our difference. No other company in the world has such a facility that we know of, which is a lot of fun and important to what we do and develop. It is part of the investment it takes to be the world leader, that the brand is today.

What products are you developing now

We've got GVM Upgrade applications rolling out, and many applications for the USA market; plus some interesting heavy-duty radiators, upgraded brake solutions, fortified shock absorbers and parabolic spring applications.

Who uses your products

Those who appreciate the difference.

What is your greatest achievement

We're pretty proud of having 27 staff with over 25 years' service to the company. That is out of a team of 200.

The company has always looked to hire from within, rather than dropping outside managers into a leadership role. This takes time and some would say is limiting, but we have found it an incredibly enjoyable ride, as these people grow with the company.

"We grow through our people."

The Australian Automotive 4x4 market has a rich and proud heritage. For years local design, ingenuity and showcase and support truly Australian engineered and manufactured products. There are a few aussie manufacturers

SO SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL

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SEATS
AUSTRALIAN MADE FOR COMFORT
TERRAIN TAMER 4WD
When Quality Counts

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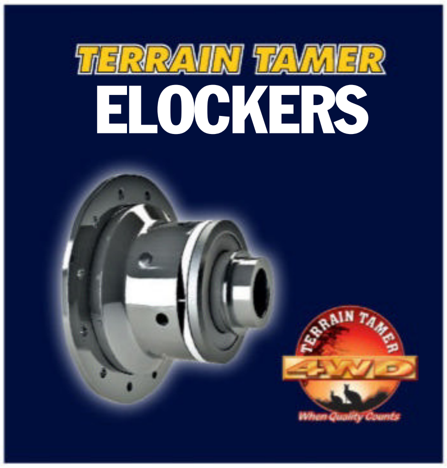
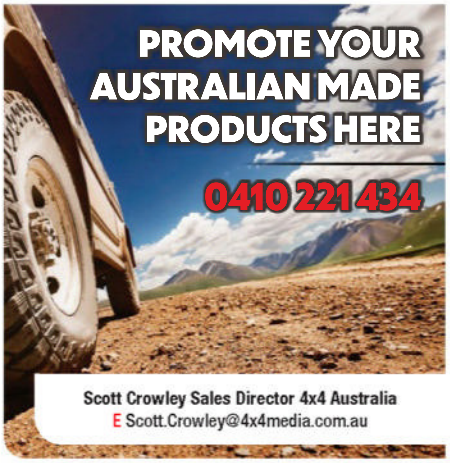

TERRAIN TAMER
ELOCKERS
TERRAIN TAMER 4WD
When Quality Counts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manufacturing have created many fantastic four-wheel drive related products. At *4X4 Australia* we are proud to keeping the dream alive, helping to keep the local manufacturing industry thriving and keeping people in real jobs.

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2025 4X4 AUSTRALIA Christmas GEAR GUIDE

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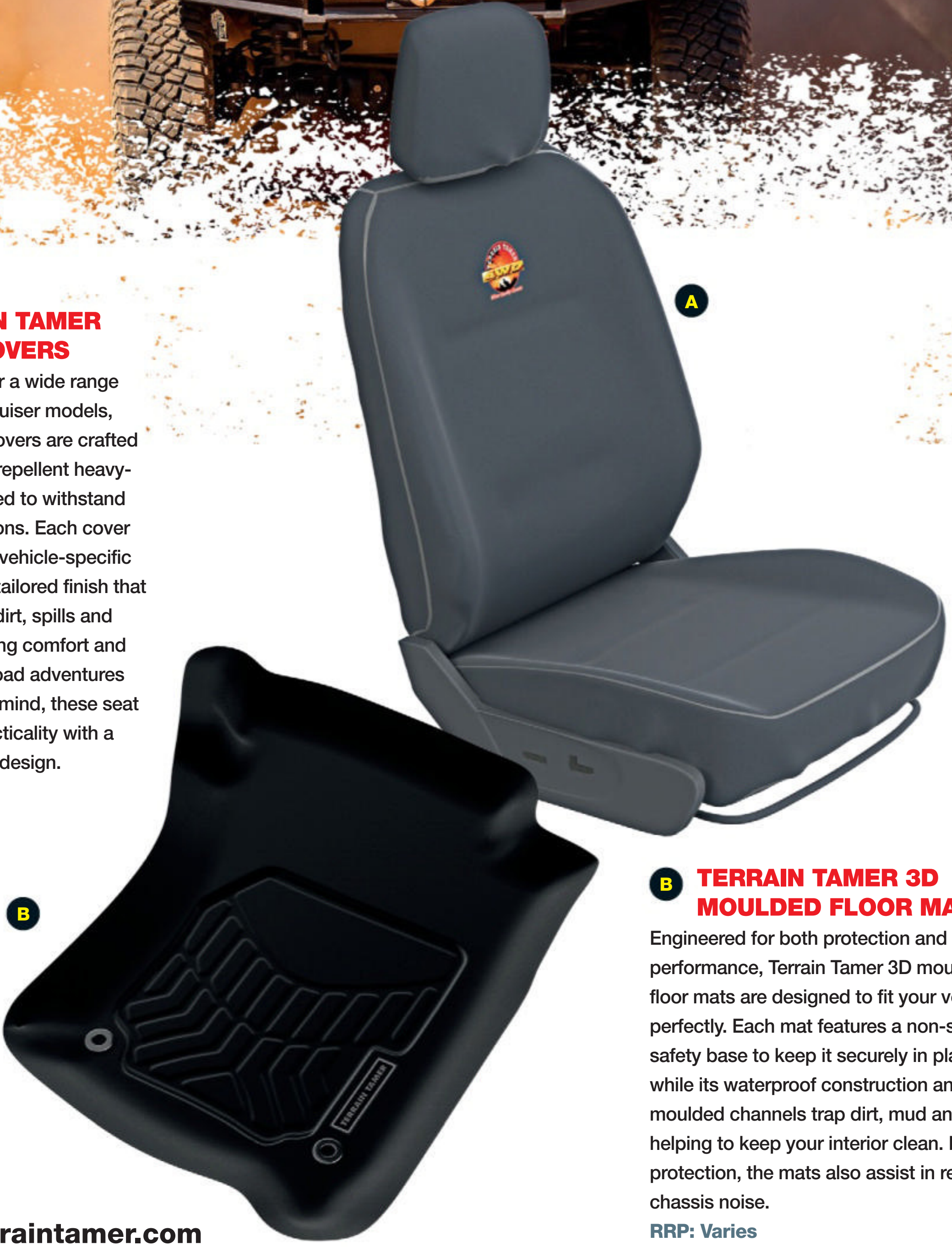

A TERRAIN TAMER SEAT COVERS

Available for a wide range of HiLux and LandCruiser models, Terrain Tamer seat covers are crafted from durable, water-repellent heavy-duty canvas, designed to withstand the toughest conditions. Each cover features a patented, vehicle-specific fit, ensuring a snug, tailored finish that protects seats from dirt, spills and wear while maintaining comfort and style. Built with off-road adventures and everyday use in mind, these seat covers combine practicality with a rugged, long-lasting design.

RRP: Varies

B TERRAIN TAMER 3D MOULDED FLOOR MATS

Engineered for both protection and performance, Terrain Tamer 3D moulded floor mats are designed to fit your vehicle perfectly. Each mat features a non-slip safety base to keep it securely in place, while its waterproof construction and deep moulded channels trap dirt, mud and water, helping to keep your interior clean. Beyond protection, the mats also assist in reducing chassis noise.

RRP: Varies

www.terraintamer.com

HULK
4X4
HULK·44

A HULK 4X4 HYDRO BAGS

HULK 4X4 Hydro Bags are built to keep your gear dry, safe and organised no matter where your adventures take you. Crafted from tough, fully waterproof materials, they're designed to withstand rain, mud and rough handling. Versatile and practical, these bags come in multiple sizes, colours and configurations, making it easy to pack efficiently for any trip.

RRP: From $99

B HULK 4X4 JUMP STARTERS

HULK 4X4 premium jump starters deliver dependable emergency power when you need it most, ensuring your 4x4, camper or touring vehicle gets up and running no matter the conditions. Available in 800A, 2000A and 2500A units, these robust devices are engineered to handle a wide range of vehicles and battery sizes. Compact yet powerful, they feature durable construction, easy-to-use clamps and built-in safety protections to prevent overcurrent, short circuits or reverse polarity.

RRP: From $152

C HULK 4X4 KINETIC ROPES AND HYPER SOFT SHACKLES

HULK 4X4 Kinetic Ropes and Hyper Soft Shackles are engineered for off-road enthusiasts who demand strength, reliability and safety in every recovery. Designed to deliver exceptional tensile strength and controlled elasticity, the kinetic ropes absorb shock loads to make recoveries smoother and safer.

Hyper soft shackles provide a lightweight, flexible and incredibly strong alternative to traditional metal shackles, reducing the risk of injury or damage during use. Both feature bright, reinforced designs for high visibility, braided protection for long-lasting durability, and come with convenient dry bags for secure storage and quick deployment.

RRP: Varies

D IGNITE PORTABLE UNDERBONNET WORK LAMP

The 10W Ignite Rectangular LED Work Lamp delivers reliable, high-quality lighting wherever you need it. Featuring adjustable brightness, it allows you to tailor illumination for any task or environment, while its built-in rechargeable battery ensures cordless convenience on the go. Designed for versatility, the lamp offers multiple mounting options and a compact, portable form factor, making it easy to position, carry or transport. **RRP: $115**

B

C

A

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KINETIC ROPE
HULK
hydro bag

D

ignite
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SC-V-P1
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SC-V-S1
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Solar Connection

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CHECK CABLE POLARITY

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From solar to water - everything to get you connected. Built for life on the move, the Scanstrut Ventura Series delivers compact, durable utility sockets for overlanders, vanlifers, and RV explorers.

Rugged **Waterproof** **Adventure Ready**

For full technical specifications and product information visit **scanstrut.com** or contact **Scanstrut USA** usasales@scanstrut.com +1 860 308 1416

Photo by Drive OVP

C YAKIMA STAGETWO HITCH RACK

The Yakima StageTwo hitch rack is e-Bike-ready and fits 16-29-inch wheels, tyres up to five inches wide, and wheelbases 76-132cm.

StadiumSeating trays, V-shaped rear cradles and the StrongArm hook protect frames and prevent bike-to-bike interference. The SpeedKnob and smooth tilt mechanism allow easy boot/tub access, while integrated SKS locks, offset trays and accessory compatibility (RampUp, BackSwing, StraightShot) enhance convenience. Can carry two bikes (expandable to four), supports up to 31.75kg per bike, and the rack can be folded neatly away when not in use.

RRP: $1299 (StageTwo); $899 (StageTwo + 2 add on); $159 (RampUp)

Website: yakima.com.au

A CUSTOM LITHIUM TOYOTA HILUX N80 DUAL BATTERY

This rear-seat dual-battery setup suits HiLux N80 models from 2016 to 2024, including the 48V variant. It uses a vehicle-specific aluminium mounting tray to position the auxiliary battery, chargers and monitors securely behind the rear seat.

Available in 100Ah and 200Ah ultra-slim formats, the batteries use A-grade automotive LiFePO4 cells in a compact aluminium enclosure designed to limit vibration and maintain cabin space. A Heltech BMS provides over-temperature, over-discharge and short-circuit protection, with an active balancer managing individual cell performance.

Each unit is bench-tested and assembled in Brisbane. The system is modular, allowing users to select capacity and charging components.

Covered by a seven-year warranty.

RRP: From $1610

Website: customlithium.com.au

A

customLITHIUM
100ah Ultra Slim
LiFePO4 Battery

B TOURING SOLUTIONS AUSTRALIA RAM 1500 DT GVM UPGRADE

Touring Solutions Australia offers GVM upgrades for the RAM 1500 DT, increasing carrying capacity to improve stability, reduce suspension and chassis wear, and maintain road compliance. Upgrades enhance towing, extend vehicle lifespan and allow heavier loads for work or adventure.

Options include light and heavy duty upgrades with Apex 2.5 MRR coil overs and shocks, upper control arms, reinforced rear coil springs, airbags, Cat 6 indicators and SSM Federal Engineering certification.

The 3.99T Hurricane Limited is optimised for higher payloads, while the 4.2T upgrade adds 500kg rear springs, a coil tower brace and a floating axle differential. All are engineered to maintain safety, handling and performance under increased GVM.

RRP: From $12,790

Website: www.touringsolutionsaustralia.com.au

D EVAKOOL 95L DOWN UNDER II FRIDGE FREEZER

This Aussie-made dual-zone fridge/freezer offers a total capacity of 95 litres, split into 40L and 55L zones, with a compact footprint of 967mm long (899mm without handles), 530mm wide and 468mm high, and a weight of 30kg.

The unit runs on 12/24V DC or 240V AC via the included adapter, with a Secop PBC 2.5 compressor and efficient roll-bond evaporator for reliable cooling between +10°C and -18°C. Average power consumption is 2.2A/hr at 32°C with dual-zone operation.

It features removable baskets, internal LED lighting and spring-loaded carry handles for easy access and transport. True dual-zone functionality is complemented by a bi-directional design, removable lids and a smart LED control panel with Bluetooth app integration for convenient temperature management.

RRP: $2049

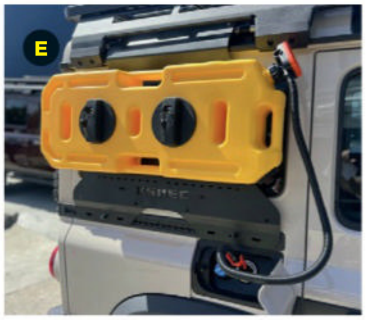
Website: evakool.com.au

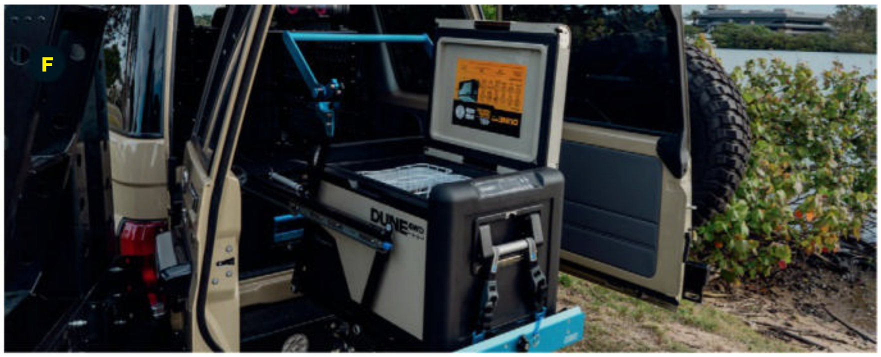
E EXPEDITION HQ XSPEC XFRAME, 30L DIESEL TANK AND TRANSFER PUMP COMBO

Designed for the INEOS Grenadier, this combo provides additional fuel capacity and convenient refuelling on the go. The kit includes two XSPEC Xframes with mounting hardware, a 30L diesel tank with lockable mounts, and a fuel transfer pump with diesel adapter funnel. The tank can be filled in place and fuel pumped directly into the vehicle's filler when needed. The second Xframe can be used to mount additional gear such as Maxtrax, an XSPEC pantry unit or a jerry can holder, offering a versatile cargo and drawer solution for extended off-road trips.

RRP: $2366

Website: expeditionhq.com.au





F MSA 4X4 DROP SLIDE

The MSA Drop Slide is designed for 4x4 touring, camping and off-road setups, providing a controlled 300mm horizontal drop to make fridge access easier when the vehicle is fully loaded. The mechanism lowers the fridge without tilting, reducing reach and improving accessibility. The unit uses a powder-coated steel frame with a low-profile handle and an anodised faceplate. Its lock-in, lock-out system secures the slide during use and transport, helping prevent movement on rough tracks. Built as a heavy-duty component with a lifetime guarantee, the Drop Slide focuses on durability, stability and ease of use.

RRP: From $898

Website: msa4x4.com.au

G 70 SERIES STORE CUP HOLDER ARM RESTS PRO

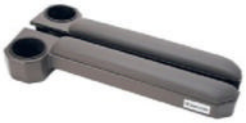
These Cup Holder Armrests are designed for the 70 Series, improving interior comfort and utility. The arm rests feature ultra-soft cushioning to reduce elbow fatigue on long drives. Integrated cup holders accommodate drink containers up to 7.5cm wide and include non-slip inserts to minimise spills over rough terrain.

Mounting is simple: powerful magnets and a lip allow the armrests to clip securely over the window sill, with no drilling required. They're made from durable ABS and synthetic leather, with a total length of 49.5cm per armrest. These armrests are sold as a pair (driver and passenger side) and work with the factory interior trim.

RRP: $237

Website: 70seriesstore.com.au

G



READERS RIGS

WANT TO SEE YOUR 4X4 PUBLISHED IN THE MAG? SEND US A PIC VIA OUR FACEBOOK PAGE!

PETER HUDSON

TOYOTA LANDCRUISER 100

Here's my 100 Series Toyota LandCruiser. It's running a 1HD-FTE engine with a Cross Country top-mount intercooler, three-inch exhaust and a 2.5-inch lift.

It sits on Dirty Life wheels with 33-inch Maxxis muddies. Front and rear bars, an Ironman winch and Stedi spotlights round out the package.

MAT ROB

4WD KEI TRUCK

I've been out in western NSW with my 4WD kei truck! (A kei truck is a lightweight Japanese pick-up built to strict kei-class regulations. Typically under 660cc with compact dimensions, they're cheap to run, highly manoeuvrable and designed for work like farming, light deliveries or small-scale off-roading.)

JORDAN VINES

2023 FORD RANGER WILDTRAK V6

Next-gen Ranger with Old Man Emu BP-51s all around, an ARB Summit bullbar with a Warn Evo winch, ARB underbody protection and a Safari snorkel. The best place I've been with it so far is Fraser Island, as pictured – with many more places yet to take her.

CRAIG MCCARDLE

2018 MITSUBISHI TRITON BLACKLINE

Too many modifications to list – let's just say there's $35K worth of gear on it as it stands. The best places it has been so far are the Flinders Ranges in SA and the Blue Mountains in NSW.

ANTHONY POTTER

2024 MITSUBISHI TRITON GSR

Still mostly stock aside from a genuine bullbar, side steps and AT tyres. That's all for now – she's still a baby! Pictured here at the NBCF Springs 4x4 event. I held back on Beer O'Clock Hill – couldn't risk making all those highly modified LandCruisers and Patrols feel inadequate. Pumped for more adventures!

TIM RUMBLE

2003 TOYOTA HILUX

This was my old 2003 Hilux – a V6 petrol with a full exhaust, two-inch lift, one-inch body lift and a front diff locker. It rode on 32-inch mud tyres mounted to 15-inch Bushproof steel wheels, with an Xrox bullbar, 12,000lb winch, rock sliders and some custom rear tub bar work.

The best place I took it to was the Cape back in 2019, and it's been to countless other spots across our beautiful country.

Letting it go was tough, but after nearly two years of full-time travel, we upgraded to a 2015 model that is better suited to touring.

Still, this 2003 Luxy was an absolute weapon – reliable as the sun rising each day.

4X4 SHED

KIA TASMAN X-PRO

0015279 KM

DATE ACQUIRED: OCT 2025
PRICE: $77,990
KM THIS MONTH: N/A
AV FUEL: 9.9L/N/A

THROUGH THE LENS

A WEEK IN THE FIELD GIVES *4X4 AUSTRALIA'S* RESIDENT PHOTOGRAPHER A CLOSE-UP LOOK AT OUR KIA TASMAN X-PRO

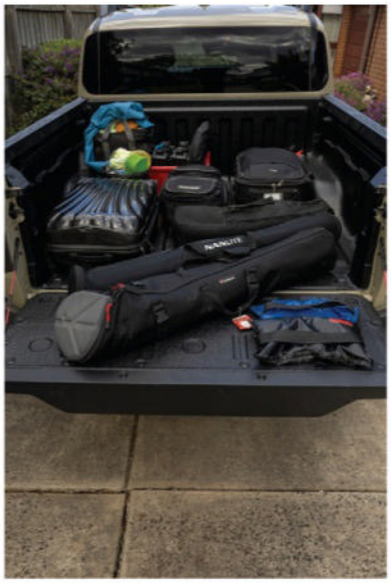
WORDS & PHOTOS **ELLEN DEWAR**

In my Inner West street there's no shortage of car enthusiasts – a real menagerie of personalities and vehicles. The rotating test-car fleet usually sparks lively debate, but nothing has divided opinions quite like the Kia Tasman. Its styling has prompted plenty of spirited comments, not all flattering. Then again, neither was '90s baggy fashion, and that's well and truly back – along with a resurgence of the music.

Like any new model, the Tasman takes a little getting used to. At 5ft 2, climbing in and out of vehicles can feel like a minor workout, and the Kia sits even taller than my FJ Cruiser. I briefly considered fitting a small step but quickly dismissed it as overcomplicating things. For now, getting aboard is treated as part of my fitness routine – made easier by the well-placed grab handles.

Inside, the cabin feels refined. The layout is modern and easy to settle into once the start button is located – tucked cheekily behind the steering wheel, it isn't immediately intuitive. The seats are well-cushioned and supportive, making long drives comfortable, while visibility is excellent, though shorter drivers will need to adjust the seat carefully. Cabin noise is minimal, and the infotainment system is straightforward, though, like all new tech, it can distract until you're familiar with its features. Apple CarPlay proved a little frustrating when trying to switch to local radio – multiple button presses were required, and even after several attempts, I still couldn't recall the exact sequence.

Over 10 days with the Tasman as my workhorse, the first task was shed-cleaning at my parents' property, followed by a long week at Wheels Car of the Year (COTY). The tub



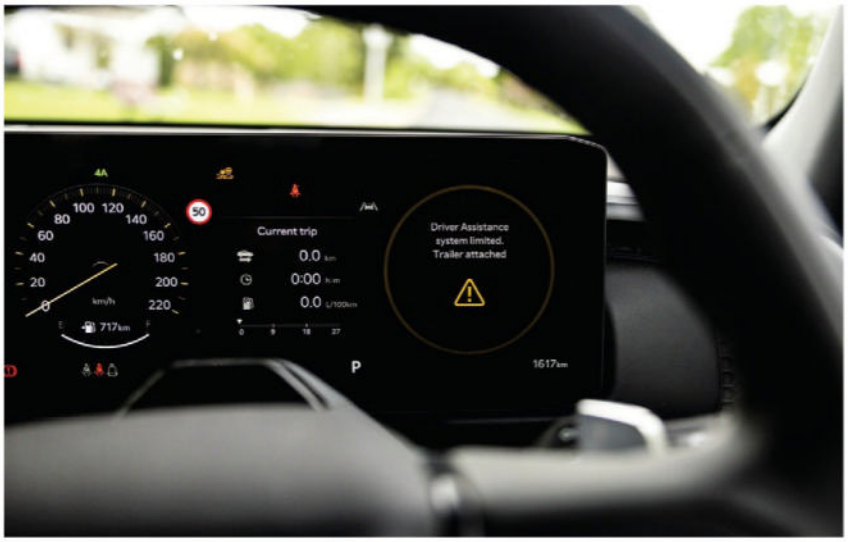
lining is excellent for stress-free loading, with ample tie-down points to secure gear. Hitching a trailer was straightforward: the rear camera provided a clear view for alignment, and the standard 7-pin flat configuration made connections easy. Lights, indicators and brakes all performed as expected, though the trailer-signal icon repeatedly flashed on the dash despite correct connections. Likely caused by the trailer's LED rear lights and older wiring, it was more of an annoyance than a functional problem.

One noticeable limitation was the Tasman's small side mirrors. Combined with its width, standard box trailers are invisible, even on bends, only reappearing at T-intersections. Larger mirrors would improve confidence when towing. Still, towing itself was good, even over bigger bumps on country roads. The ride feels firm, but the Tasman handled a load with ease.

Without a tonneau cover or canopy, the Tasman highlights just how exposed utes can be when carrying expensive gear. Fortunately, the rear cabin is generous, allowing camera equipment to be neatly stacked on the floor and seats while remaining easily accessible.

At COTY, Victoria threw everything at it – sun, rain, and gale-force winds and the Tasman handled it all. It drove confidently across wet, twisty Gippsland roads, pulling into muddy or gravel areas without hesitation, a godsend for this job. With tougher all-terrain tyres, it would be even more capable. Its height was also useful, doubling as a stable platform for wide multi-car setups and tracking shots at Lang Lang's speed bowl.

Over my days of testing, the Tasman impressed with its comfort and practicality. It's easy to drive and genuinely useful for work. While its styling divides opinion, it certainly gets people talking. City parking can be a challenge due to its size, but as a workhorse it's outstanding. Fitted with a canopy, it would be even better for both work and weekend adventures.



TOW 'N' GO

The Kia has tow modes and keeps the driver informed of what's going on behind it

THE SCORE

THE ESSENTIAL NUMBERS AND PRICES OF EVERY 4X4 ON SALE IN AUSTRALIA

TOYOTA
HILUX

RANGER TOPS OCTOBER 2025 4X4 SALES AS NEW HILUX LOOMS

The Ford Ranger once again maintained its grip on the Australian 4x4 market in October, selling 4195 units and holding the top spot for the month… but is that about to be flipped on its head with the launch of the new Toyota HiLux?

The impending launch of the new-generation HiLux has hardly slowed demand for the outgoing model, with the fan favourite registering a total of 3793 4x4 sales, placing it ahead of the Ford Everest (2435 sales), which outpaced the Toyota Prado (1458) and 300 Series (1138), and the Isuzu D-Max (1462 sales).

In fact, when combining 4x2 and 4x4 variants HiLux edged out Ranger as Australia's top-selling vehicle for October, with 4444 sales versus 4402. Rounding out the top five were the Toyota RAV4 (4401), Ford Everest (2435) and Toyota LandCruiser (2090), collectively representing nearly 18 per cent of total vehicle sales.

Also affecting the Ranger vs HiLux battle will be the impending loss of the bi-turbo diesel engine from the Ranger line-up, making the single-turbo powerplant the only four-cylinder diesel variant on offer. An expansion of the V6 engine across the range, along with the early arrival of the Ranger Super Duty, could offset that loss somewhat, but it still sets up a close run to the finish for our two best-selling utes in 2025.

BYD Shark 6 sales remained consistent, with 1070 registered for the month and 15,181 so far this year. Hybrids now account for 17.8 per cent of the market, plug-in hybrids 4.7 per cent, and battery-electric vehicles 7.3 per cent. Compared to October 2024, hybrid sales have grown 25 per cent, PHEVs surged 95 per cent, while BEVs remained steady. Year-to-date, hybrids are up 12 per cent and PHEVs have jumped 137.4 per cent.

Across broader segments, passenger vehicle sales fell 21.6 per cent versus October last year, while the SUV segment grew 9.4 per cent. Light commercial vehicles (LCVs) remained largely unchanged, down 0.6 per cent. Within the PU/CC 4x4 category, year-to-date sales reached 179,259 units – up 3.5 per cent on the same period in 2024. Diesel models dominated October LCV sales (18,990), with petrol (1502) and PHEVs (1426) representing much smaller market share.

The GWM Cannon led the budget 4x4 segment in October with 698 sales. The JAC T9 moved 106 units, the LDV Terron sold 157, and the KGM Musso recorded 189 sales.

UTE OF THE YEAR

FORD RANGER

4195

UNITS SOLD IN OCT

3793

UNITS SOLD IN OCT

2435

UNITS SOLD IN OCT

JUST THE FACTS

Top-selling 4x4s in October 2025
Source: VFACTS

VEHICLE	UNITS
1. Ford Ranger	4195
2. Toyota HiLux	3793
3. Ford Everest	2435
4. Isuzu D-MAX	1462
5. Toyota Prado	1458
6. Mitsubishi Triton	1447
7. Toyota LC300	1138
8. BYD Shark 6	1070
9. Toyota LC79	952
10. Mazda BT-50	925

Top-selling 4x4s year-to-date to October 2025
Source: VFACTS

VEHICLE	UNITS
1. Ford Ranger	43,924
2. Toyota HiLux	38,168
3. Toyota Prado	23,298
4. Ford Everest	21,915
5. Isuzu D-MAX	17,905
6. BYD Shark 6	15,181
7. Mitsubishi Triton	13,702
8. Isuzu MU-X	12,499
9. Toyota LandCruiser 300	10,026
10. Mazda BT-50	9864

FORD

5-year/unlimited km **www.ford.com.au**

RANGER

The next-gen Ranger took the best-seller crown away from HiLux in 2023. Full-time 4x4 is offered on all V6 models and the 2.0TD Wildtrak X. There is a price hike across the range this month.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
Single XL C/C	48,230	BiT4/2.0	A10	500	154	1903	1327	3500	80
Super XL C/C	50,730	BiT4/2.0	A10	500	154	2007	1223	3500	80
Super XL P/U	52,380	BiT4/2.0	A10	500	154	2167	1063	3500	80
Double XL C/C	49,230	SiT4/2.0	A6	405	125	2046	1144	3500	80
Double XL C/C	51,780	BiT4/2.0	A10	500	154	2072	1158	3500	80
Double XL P/U	51,130	SiT4/2.0	A6	405	125	2190	1000	3500	80
Double XL P/U	53,680	BiT4/2.0	A10	500	154	2216	1014	3500	80
Double XLS P/U	57,880	BiT4/2.0	A10	500	154	2216	1014	3500	80
Super XLT P/U	61,890	BiT4/2.0	A10	500	154	2178	1052	3500	80
Double XLT P/U	63,390	BiT4/2.0	A10	500	154	2225	1005	3500	80
Double XLT C/C	67,190	V6/3.0	A10	600	184	2129	1151	3500	80
Double XLT P/U	63,890	BiT4/2.0	A10	500	154	2217	1015	3500	80
Double XLT P/U	69,090	V6/3.0	A10	600	184	2285	995	3500	80
Dbl XLT P/U H	71,990	T4/2.3PHEV	A10	697	207	2527	830	3500	70
Double Sport P/U	66,390	BiT4/2.0	A10	500	154	2242	988	3500	80
Double Sport P/U	71,340	V6/3.0	A10	600	184	2300	980	3500	80
Double Sport P/U	75,990	T4/2.3PHEV	A10	697	207	2566	805	3500	70
Dbl Wildtrak P/U	69,890	BiT4/2.0	A10	500	154	2295	985	3500	80
Dbl Tremor P/U	69,690	BiT4/2.0	A10	500	154	2419	901	3500	80
Dbl Wildtrak P/U	75,090	V6/3.0	A10	600	184	2353	997	3500	80
Db Wildtrak P/U	79,990	T4/2.3PHEV	A10	697	207	2615	795	3500	70
Dbl Wildtrak X P/U	77,640	BiT4/2.0	A10	500	154	2432	918	3500	80
Dbl Platinum P/U	80,890	V6/3.0	A10	600	184	N/A	N/A	3500	80
Single S/Duty C/C	82,990	V6/3.0	A10	600	154	N/A	1982	4500	80
Super S/Duty C/C	86,490	V6/3.0	A10	600	154	N/A	1896	4500	80
Dbl Stormtrak P/U	86,990	T4/2.3PHEV	A10	697	207	2692	795	3500	70
Dbl S/Duty C/C	89,990	V6/3.0	A10	697	154	N/A	1825	4500	80
Dbl Raptor P/U	90,690	V6P/3.0	A10	583	292	2431	753	2500	80

EVEREST

Everest's four variants are joined by two more – the Wildtrak and Tremor – sitting between Sport and Platinum and available with the 3.0-litre TDV6 donk. There's also a price increase for this month.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
Ambiente	59,440	L4TD/2.0	A10	500	154	2367	733	3500	80
Trend	67,290	L4TD/2.0	A10	500	154	2383	717	3500	80
Sport	75,990	V6TD/3.0	A10	600	184	2454	696	3500	80
Tremor	78,440	V6TD/3.0	A10	600	184	N/A	N/A	3500	80
Wildtrak	76,950	V6TD/3.0	A10	600	184	2488	662	3500	80
Platinum	82,990	V6TD/3.0	A10	600	184	2492	658	3500	80

F150

Ford Australia has brought the F150 back to our shores with two models available in two wheelbases. The long wheelbase adds $995 to the price and also gets you a longer cargo bed.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
XLT (SWB)	106,950	V6TP/3.5	A10	678	298	2451	769	4500	136
XLT (LWB)	107,945	V6TP/3.5	A10	678	298	N/A	N/A	4500	136
Lariat (SWB)	139,950	V6TP/3.5	A10	678	298	2555	710	4500	136
Lariat (LWB)	140,945	V6TP/3.5	A10	678	298	N/A	N/A	4500	136

BYD

5-year/unlimited km **www.ford.com.au**

SHARK6

Build Your Dreams first entry to the Australian market is the Shark double0cab ute and it comes with a hybrid EV powertrain and a preper 4x4 system

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
Shark 6 Premium	57,900	T4PHEV/1.5	CVT	650	321	2710	790	2500	60

GWM

7-year/unlimited km **www.gmwute.com.au**

UTE

GWM's next-gen Cannon features a more grunty 2.4-litre turbo-diesel four-cylinder donk (replacing the previous-gen 2.0TD) , backed by a nine-speed auto gearbox. It also has a higher braked towing capacity.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
Lux	40,490*	L4TD/2.4	A9	480	135	2230	995	3500	75
Ultra	43,490*	L4TD/2.4	A9	480	135	2230	995	3500	75
Vanta	45,490*	L4TD/2.4	A9	480	135	2230	995	3500	75
XSR	49,990*	L4TD/2.4	A9	480	135	2230	875	3500	75

TANK 300

The Tank 300's duo of 2.0-litre petrol-electric hybrid versions are now joined by two 2.0-litre petrol-only powered rigs at significantly lower asking prices.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
Lux	46,990	L4TD/2.4	A9	480	135	2280	600	3000	75
Ultra (petrol)	50,990	L4TP/2.0	A8	380	162	2155	610	3000	75
Ultra (diesel)	55,990	L4TD/2.4	A9	480	135	2280	600	3000	75
Ultra (hybrid)	60,990	L4HY/2.0	A9	648	255	2335	600	3000	75

TANK 500

The Tank 500 is aimed squarely at the family 4x4 market, currently dominated by Prado and Everest. With its competitive pricing, grunty hybrid powerplant and decent payload, it offers plenty.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
Lux	66,490	L4HY/2.0	A9	648	255	2605	790	3000	80
Ultra	73,990	L4HY/2.0	A9	648	255	2605	790	3000	80
Vanta	75,990	L4HY/2.0	A9	648	255	2605	790	3000	80

GMSV

www.gmspecialtyvehicles.com.au

CHEVROLET SILVERADO 1500

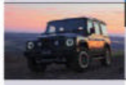
For 2023 Chevrolet dropped the previous entry-level model, the LT Trail Boss. A new hero ZR2 model is now positioned at the top of the two-model range. Both powered by a 6.2-litre petrol V8.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
LTZ	130,500	V8/6.2	A10	624	313	2583	717	4200	91
ZR2	138,000	V8/6.2	A10	624	313	2543	757	4500	91

INEOS

www.ineosgrenadier.com/en/au/

GRENADIER



Ineos brings back the simple, durable 4x4 vehicle that adventurers and organisations want for serious off-road travel, available with both petrol and diesel powertrains and two-seat (2s) or five-seat (5s) interiors.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
Utility wagon 2s	104,000	I6P/3.0	A8	450	210	2618	932	3500	90
Fieldmaster 2s	122,000	I6D/3.0	A8	550	183	2693	857	3500	90
Trialmaster 2s	122,000	I6P/3.0	A8	450	210	2643	907	3500	90
Station wagon 5s	105,000	I6P/3.0	A8	450	210	2643	907	3500	90
Trialmaster 5s	123,000	I6P/3.0	A8	450	210	2643	907	3500	90
Fieldmaster 5s	123,000	I6D/3.0	A8	550	183	2718	832	3500	90

ISUZU UTE

6-year/150,000km **www.isuzuute.com.au**

D-MAX

D-MAX has cut its links with GM and is an all-Isuzu affair. The latest model is a huge step up with class-leading safety tech, more power and torque from the 3.0L, and fresh, aggressive styling.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
SX Single c/c	42,700	I4TD/3.0	M6	450	140	1780	1310	3500	76
SX Space c/c	48,200	I4TD/3.0	A6	450	140	1860	1240	3500	76
LS-M Crew c/c	54,300	I4TD/3.0	A6	450	140	2030	1070	3500	76
LS-U Crew c/c	61,000	I4TD/3.0	A6	450	140	1970	1130	3500	76
LS-U Space p/u	59,500	I4TD/3.0	A6	450	140	2000	1100	3500	76
SX Crew c/c	49,200	I4TD/3.0	A6	450	140	1910	1190	3500	76
SX Crew p/u	50,700	I4TD/1.9	A6	350	110	N/A	N/A	3000	76
SX Crew p/u	52,700	I4TD/3.0	A6	450	140	2035	1065	3500	76
LS-M Crew p/u	55,800	I4TD/3.0	A6	450	140	2030	1070	3500	76
X-Rider Crew p/u	59,500	I4TD/3.0	6	450	140	N/A	N/A	3500	76
LS-U Crew p/u	59,000	I4TD/3.0	A6	450	140	2045	1055	3500	76
LS-U+ Crew p/u	65,500	I4TD/3.0	A6	450	140	2115	985	3500	76
X-Terrain Crew p/u	67,990	I4TD/3.0	A6	450	140	2130	970	3500	76
Blade Crew p/u	76,990*	I4TD/3.0	A6	450	140	N/A	N/A	3500	76

MU-X

Isuzu's seven-seat wagon based on the D-MAX ute underpinnings, but with a smooth-riding coil-spring rear suspension. Buyers have the option of the tried-and-true 3.0-litre TD or new 1.9-litre oiler.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
LS-M	53,400	L4TD/1.9	A6	350	110	2140	735	3000	80
LS-M	55,400	L4TD/3.0	A6	450	140	2092	658	3500	80
LS-U	59,900	L4TD/1.9	A6	350	110	2088	685	3000	80
LS-U	61,900	L4TD/3.0	A6	450	140	2142	608	3500	80
LS-T	67,990	L4TD/3.0	A6	450	140	2157	593	3500	80
Tour Mate									

JEEP

5-year/unlimited km **www.jeep.com.au**

WRANGLER

JL Wrangler has true off-road credentials and great versatility. In Rubicon-spec, the Wrangler is an absolute off-road weapon.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
Rubicon (2D)	79,990	I4TP/2.0	A8	400	200	1762	551	1497	81
Sport S (4D)	75,950	I4TP/2.0	A8	400	200	N/A	N/A	2495	81
Overland (4D)	83,950	I4TP/2.0	A8	400	200	1900	560	2495	81
Rubicon (4D)	82,990	I4TP/2.0	A8	400	200	1992	570	2495	81

GLADIATOR

Jeep's double-cab pick-up comes in two spec levels, with the Pentastar V6 and 8-speed auto in both. The Night Eagle is the entry level while the Rubicon is the better equipped off-roader.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
Night Eagle	78,250	V6/3.6P	A8	347	209	2104	693	2721	83
Rubicon	82,990	V6/3.6P	A8	347	209	2215	693	2721	83

LAND ROVER

www.landrover.com.au

DEFENDER 90

Defender 90 range closely mimics the 110 wagon range but in a shorter three-door wagon body. Right from the four-cylinder petrol motors, through the various diesels, and up to the stonking V8.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
D90 P300	80,540	I4/2.0P	A8	400	221	2074	N/A	3500	90
D90 S P300	88,870	I4/2.0P	A8	400	221	2074	N/A	3500	90
D90 S D250	92,626	I6/3.0D	A8	570	183	2303	667	3500	89
D90 SE P400	110,870	I6/3.0P	A8	550	294	2141	N/A	3500	90
D90 X P400	154,546	I6/3.0P	A8	550	294	2141	N/A	3500	90
D90 P525	191,288	V8/5.0P	A8	625	386	2470	N/A	3000	90

DEFENDER 110

The 'new' Defender has been around for a while now, with incremental increases in power/torque outputs, engine options and (sadly) pricing along the way. Its bling exterior belies its off-road capability.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
P400 S	93,907	I6/3.0P	A8	550	294	N/A	N/A	3500	90
D350 SE	108,795	I6/3.0D	A8	700	257	N/A	N/A	3500	90
P400 SE	114,165	I6/3.0P	A8	550	294	N/A	N/A	3500	90
P400 HSE	128,815	I6/3.0P	A8	550	294	N/A	N/A	3500	90
D350 HSE	124,040	I6/3.0D	A8	700	257	N/A	N/A	3500	90
D350 Trophy Ed.	128,808	I6/3.0D	A8	700	257	N/A	N/A	3500	90
D350 X	157,224	I6/3.0D	A8	700	257	N/A	N/A	3500	90
D350 Sedona Ed.	134,706	I6/3.0D	A8	700	257	N/A	N/A	3500	90
P400 X	150,620	I6/3.0P	A8	550	294	N/A	N/A	3500	90
P400e SE	126,275	I4PH/2.0P	A8	640	297	N/A	N/A	3500	90
P400e HSE	137,975	I4PH/2.0P	A8	640	297	N/A	N/A	3500	90
P425 SE	127,100	V8/5.0P	A8	550	313	N/A	N/A	3500	90
P425 HSE	142,100	V8/5.0P	A8	550	313	N/A	N/A	3500	90
P425 X	172,600	V8/5.0P	A8	550	313	N/A	N/A	3500	90
P635 OCTA	304,500	V8/5.0P	A8	750	467	N/A	N/A	3500	90

DEFENDER 130

The largest-ever Defender is here and brings with it a lot more rear cargo space, along with some sweet powerplant options for this biggest of Brit off-roaders.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
D350 X-Dyna SE	136,000	I6/3.0D	A8	700	257	N/A	N/A	3500	90
D350 Outbound	141,600	I6/3.0D	A8	700	257	N/A	N/A	3500	90
P400 X-Dyna SE	133,471	I6/3.0P	A8	550	294	N/A	NA	3500	90
P400 Outbound	135,562	I6/3.0P	A8	550	294	N/A	N/A	3500	90
P500	216,1970	V8/5.0P	A8	610	368	N/A	N/A	3500	90

DISCOVERY

Land Rover Discovery combines excellent on-road dynamics with impressive off-road capability. Strong performance comes via the choice of V6 turbo-diesel or V6 petrol powerplants.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
D350 S Dynamic	116,006	I6TD/3.0	A8	700	257	2109	831	3500	90
D350 SE Dynamic	123,564	I6TD/3.0	A8	700	257	2236	814	3500	90
D350 HSE Dynam	130,405	I6TD/3.0	A8	700	257	2236	814	3500	90
D350 35th Anniv.	133,176	I6TD/3.0	A8	700	257	2236	814	3500	90
P360 S RDynamic	121,539	I6TP/3.0	A8	500	265	2236	814	3500	90
P360 SE Dynamic	122,070	I6TP/3.0	A8	500	265	2236	814	3500	90
P360 HSE Dynam	128,430	I6TP/3.0	A8	500	265	2236	814	3500	90

RANGE ROVER SPORT

There are six Rangie Sport models to choose from in this latest incarnation, with both the diesel (in three different outputs), and petrol powerplants featuring mild-hybrid tech.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
D250 SE	146,799	I6TD/3.0	A8	600	183	2390	830	3500	80
D300 SE Dynamic	159,481	I6TD/3.0	A8	650	221	2390	830	3500	80
D350 HSE Dyn	177,847	I6TD/3.0	A8	700	258	2435	785	3500	80
D350 Autobio	197,176	I6TD/3.0	A8	700	225	2435	830	3500	80
P360 SE Dynamic	139,000	I6P/3.0	A8	500	265	2271	N/A	3500	80
P400 SE Dynamic	160,576	I6P/3.0	A8	550	294	2316	N/A	3500	80
P400 HSE Dyn	172,676	I6P/3.0	A8	550	294	N/A	N/A	3500	80
P460 HSE Dyn	181,018	I6P/3.0	A8	660	338	2730	720	3500	80
P460 Autobio	204,596	I6P/3.0	A8	660	338	2730	720	3500	80
P530 Autobio	239,372	V8TTP/4.4	A8	750	390	2436	814	3500	80
P635 SV Edition	320,941	V8TTP/4.4	A8	750	467	N/A	N/A	3500	80

RANGE ROVER

Bespoke personalisation and new hybrid powertrains herald in revised Range Rover line-up.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
D350 HSE	271,700	I6/3.0	A8	700	258	N/A	N/A	3500	80
P460e HSE	280,100	I6e/3.0	A8	660	338	N/A	N/A	3000	72
P460e LWB HSE	288,500	I6e/3.0	A8	660	338	N/A	N/A	3000	72
P530 HSE	282,500	V8/4.4	A8	750	390	N/A	N/A	3500	90
P460e Autobiog.	296,427	I6e/3.0	A8	660	338	N/A	N/A	3000	72
D350 A/B	298,659	I6/3.0	A8	700	258	N/A	N/A	3500	80
P460e LWB A/B	298,999	I6e/3.0	A8	660	338	N/A	N/A	3000	72
D350 LWB A/B	304,530	I6/3.0	A8	700	258	N/A	N/A	3500	80
D350 LWB 7s A/B	306,075	I6/3.0	A8	700	258	N/A	N/A	3500	80
P530 Autobiog.	353,300	V8/4.4	A8	750	390	N/A	N/A	3500	90
P530 LWB A/B	355,000	V8/4.4	A8	750	390	N/A	N/A	3500	90
P530 LWB 7s A/B	339,314	V8/4.4	A8	750	390	N/A	N/A	3500	90
P615 SV	411,600	V8/4.4	A8	750	452	N/A	N/A	3500	90
P615 LWB SV	461,200	V8/4.4	A8	750	452	N/A	N/A	3500	90

LDV

7-year/200,000km **www.ldvautomotive.com.au**

T60

Chinese ute brings five-star safety to the budget-priced dual-cab segment. Revamped in 2021, with the Pro variants bringing more power and redesigned front-end.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
Max Pro (manual)	41,042	I4/2.0	M6	500	160	N/A	935	3000	73
Max Pro (auto)	43,148	I4/2.0	A8	500	160	N/A	925	3000	73
Max Luxe (manual)	45,779	I4/2.0	M6	500	160	N/A	935	3000	73
Max Luxe (auto)	47,884	I4/2.0	A8	500	160	2900	925	3000	73
Max Luxe Mega Tub	49,463	I4/2.0	A8	500	160	2900	925	3000	73
Max Plus (manual)	48,411	I4/2.0	M6	500	160	2900	925	3000	73
Max Plus Mega Tub	52,095	I4/2.0	A8	500	160	N/A	N/A	3000	73

TERRON 9

LDV's new workhorse brings big size and load capacity to the competitve 4x4 dual-cab ute market, bulking up larger than a HiLux. As well as a punchy 2.5TD, it offers plenty of interior space.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
Origin	53,674	I4/2.5	A8	520	163	2400	1100	3500	80
Evolve	58,937	I4/2.5	A8	520	163	2400	1100	3500	80

LEXUS

5-year/unlimited **www.lexus.com.au**

LX

Now with two powerplant options – the diesel is a trick twin-turbo V6; the petrol is rorty, if not as glorious as the previous-gen V8 – and improved dynamics, this is now capital "L" for luxury with bite.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
LX500	158,700	V6TTD/3.3	A10	700	227	2690	TBC	3500	80
LX500 SL	176,300	V6TTD/3.3	A10	700	227	2690	TBC	3500	80
LX500 SL (7-seat)	178,900	V6TTD/3.3	A10	700	227	2690	TBC	3500	80
LX500 F Sport	182,300	V6TTD/3.3	A10	700	227	2690	TBC	3500	80
LX500 Overtrail	182,300	V6TTD/3.3	A10	700	227	2690	TBC	3500	80
LX600	162,200	V6TTP/3.5	A10	650	305	2660	TBC	3500	110
LX600 SL	179,800	V6TTP/3.5	A10	650	305	2660	TBC	3500	110
LX600 SL (7-seat)	183,600	V6TTP/3.5	A10	650	305	2660	TBC	3500	110
LX600 F Sport	185,800	V6TTP/3.5	A10	650	305	2660	TBC	3500	110
LX600 Overtrail	185,800	V6TTP/3.5	A10	650	305	2660	TBC	3500	110
LX600 Ultra Lux	220,950	V6TTP/3.5	A10	650	305	2660	TBC	3500	110

MAHINDRA

5-year/unlimited **www.mahindra.com.au**

PIK-UP

Now dual-cab only and still with the option of tub or no tub, this tough and reliable farm truck is proving popular out bush and is good bang for your workhorse bucks.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
Dual Cab	39,990*	L4TD/2.2	A6	330	103	1940	1210	2500	80

SCORPIO

It may be missing some key safety technology, but the Scorpio six-seater isn't just a good value-for-money package, it's a good rig overall.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
Z8	41,990*	L4TD/2.2	A6	400	129	1900	525	2500	57
Z8L	44,990*	L4TD/2.2	A6	400	129	2100	510	2500	57

*This is a nationwide drive-away price, not a list price, and includes on-roads.

MAZDA

5-year/unlimited km **www.mazda.com.au**

BT-50

The BT-50 has stepped away from its Ford roots, as Mazda partnered with Isuzu for the new model. That means Isuzu powertrains and class-leading safety wrapped in a svelte Mazda skin.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
Dual XS p/u	52,930	I4TD/1.9	A6	350	110	1935	1165	3500	76
Single XT c/c	43,520	I4TD/3.0	M6	450	140		1186	3500	76
Single XT c/c	47,250	I4TD/3.0	A6	450	140		1186	3500	76
Extra XT c/c	47,020	I4TD/3.0	M6	450	140		1135	3500	76
Extra XT c/c	51,000	I4TD/3.0	A6	450	140		1135	3500	76
Dual XT c/c	54,620	I4TD/3.0	A6	450	140		1096	3500	76
Dual XT c/c	51,330	I4TD/3.0	M6	450	140		1106	3500	76
Dual XT p/u	52,730	I4TD/3.0	M6	450	140		1095	3500	76
Dual XT p/u	56,220	I4TD/3.0	A6	450	140		1090	3500	76
Dual XTR c/c	57,880	I4TD./.0	A6	450	140	1910	1190	3500	76
Dual XTR p/u	56,780	I4TD/3.0	M6	450	140		1080	3500	76
Dual XTR p/u	62,750	I4TD/3.0	A6	450	140		1070	3500	76
Dual GT p/u	57,090	I4TD/3.0	M6	450	140		1075	3500	76
Dual GT p/u	66,170	I4TD/3.0	A6	450	140		1065	3500	76
Dual SP p/u	63,090	I4TD/3.0	M6	450	140	2198	902	3500	76
Dual SP p/u	71,500	I4TD/3.0	A6	450	140	2208	892	3500	76
Dual Thunder p/u	74,095	I4TD/3.0	A6	450	140	2213	887	3500	76

MERCEDES

3-year/200,000km **www.mercedes-benz.com.au**

G-CLASS

With triple diff locks, long-travel coil suspension and rugged construction, Merc's Gelandewagen is off-road heritage writ large. Unfortunately, so is the price tag on an updated 30-year-old design.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
G63 AMG	259,600	V8/4.0	A9	850	430	2560	640	3500	100
G400d	233,776	I6/2.9	A9	700	243	2489	661	3500	112

MITSUBISHI

7-year/150,000km **www.mitsubishi-motors.com.au**

PAJERO SPORT

Pajero Sport replaced the Challenger in Mitsubishi's 4x4 range. It's still on a Triton ute chassis but with rear coils under the back and bespoke bodywork. 2020 refresh added Dynamic Shield front end.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
GLX (5-seat)	51,540	L4TD/2.4	A8	430	133	2145	630	3100	68
GLS (7s)	56,890	L4TD/2.4	A8	430	133	2195	580	3100	68
GLS Deluxe (7s)	57,440	L4TD/2.4	A8	430	133	2204	571	3100	68
Exceed (7s)	62,590	L4TD/2.4	A8	430	133	2209	566	3100	68
GSR (7s)	64,840	L4TD/2.4	A8	430	133	2209	566	3100	68

TRITON

This is the sixth incarnation of Triton, with plenty of new kit, including a sweet twin-turbo diesel engine, more bluff exterior styling, and improved interior.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
GLX Single c/c	41,840	L4TD/2.4	M6	470	150	1870	1330	3500	75
GLX Single c/c	41,840	L4TD/2.4	A6	470	150	1865	1335	3500	75
GLX Club c/c	47,240	L4TD/2.4	A6	470	150	1957	1243	3500	75
GLX Dual c/c	47,240	L4TD/2.4	A6	470	150	1993	1207	3500	75
GLX Club p/u	50,340	L4TD/2.4	A6	470	150	2089	1111	3500	75
GLX+ Dual c/c	51,990	L4TD/2.4	A6	470	150	1991	1209	3500	75
GLS Dual c/c	57,540	L4TD/2.4	A6	470	150	1990	1210	3500	75
GSR Dual c/c	61,540	L4TD/2.4	A6	470	150	2006	1194	3500	75
GLX Dual p/u	50,940	L4TD/2.4	A6	470	150	2117	1083	3500	75
GLX+ Dual p/u	53,290	L4TD/2.4	A6	470	150	2108	1092	3500	75
GLX-R Dual p/u	56,740	L4TD/2.4	A6	470	150	2107	1093	3500	75
GLS Dual p/u	59,090	L4TD/2.4	A6	470	150	2129	951	3500	75
GSR	63,840	L4TD/2.4	A6	470	150	2170	910	3500	75

NISSAN

5-year/unlimited km **www.nissan.com.au**

PATROL Y62

In a segment that drinks diesel, top-spec Patrol is available in V8-petrol guise only. Fully independent suspension is backed by electronic traction aids.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
Ti	90,600	V8/5.6	A7	560	298	2812	688	3500	140
Ti-L	102,100	V8/5.6	A7	560	298	2708	746	3500	140
PRO-4X Warrior	105,660	V8/5.6	A7	560	289	2884	736	3500	140

NAVARA D23

The latest iteration of Nissan's D23 Navara ute range arrives with a bolder look and a revised line-up. Pro-4X Warrior has to be the best navara produced ever!.

Single SL c/c	43,428	L4TD/2.3	A7	450	140	N/A	N/A	3500	80
King SL c/c	47,428	L4TD/2.3	A7	403	120	1727	1183	3500	80
King SL p/u	49,228	L4TD/2.3	A7	450	140	1941	969	3500	80
King ST-X p/u	59,323	L4TD/2.3	A7	450	140	1944	966	3500	80
Dual SL c/c	46,428	L4TD/2.3	M6	403	120	1759	1147	3500	80
Dual SL p/u	48,228	L4TD/2.3	M6	450	140	1823	1087	3500	80
Dual ST p/u	53,333	L4TD/2.3	M6	450	140	N/A	N/A	3500	80
Dual ST-X p/u	56,823	L4TD/2.3	M6	450	140	1917	993	3500	80
Dual ST-X p/u	58,270	L4TD/2.3	A7	450	140	1921	989	3500	80
Dual SL Warrior	59,628	L4TD/2.3	A7	450	140	2169	1081	3500	80
PRO-4X	59,783	L4TD/2.3	M6	450	140	2137	1013	3500	80
PRO-4X	62,283	L4TD/2.3	A7	450	140	2146	1004	3500	80
PRO-4X Warrior	69,143	L4TD/2.3	M6	450	140	2289	961	3500	80
PRO-4X Warrior	71,643	L4TD/2.3	A7	450	140	2298	952	3500	80

RAM

3-year/100,000 km **www.ramtrucks.com.au**

RAM 1500

You'll find Ram trucks here from various importers, but the official distributor is Ram Trucks Australia. Currently selling the DT Ram 1500.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
Laramie	137,950	V8P/5.7	A8	556	291	2617	833	4500	98
Laramie Sport	141,950	V8P/5.7	A8	556	291	2671	779	4500	98
Big Horn	119,950	V8P/5.7	A8	556	291	N/A	N/A	4500	98
Limited	156,950	V8P/5.7	A8	556	291	2749	701	4500	98
TRX	224,950	V8P/6.2	A8	882	523	3033	767	3500	125

RAM 2500

The 2500 is the first of the heavy duty Ram models and is only available in Laramie specification in Australia. Powered by the Cummins in-line six, the 2500 is a torque monster and towing champion.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
2500 Laramie	172,950	I6d/6.7	A6	1152	276	3660	835	4500	117

RAM 3500

The 1500 is the standard model while the 2500 and 3500 Rams are the Heavy Duty versions packing HD drivelines, Cummins diesel engines and huge lowing capacities. New HD models also coming soon.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
Laramie Crew	177,950	I6TD/6.7	A6	1152	276	3596	1713	6170*	132

KGM

7-year/unlimited km **www.kgm.com.au**

MUSSO

Thrifty South Korean dual-cab has been reborn with more subdued styling and an unbeatable warranty. XLV variant adds segment-topping tray length to the line-up's killer pricing.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
EX	30,490	L4TD/2.2	M6	400	133	2177	703	3500	75
EX	32,490	L4TD/2.2	A6	400	133	2192	688	3500	75
ELX	40,000	L4TD/2.2	A6	400	133	2192	688	3500	75
Ultimate	45,000	L4TD/2.2	A6	400	133	2192	688	3500	75

ELX XLV	33,990	L4TD/2.2	M6	400	133	2160	1025	3500	75
ELX XLV	41,500	L4TD/2.2	A6	400	133	2170	1025	3500	75
Ultimate XLV	46,500	L4TD/2.2	A6	400	133	2170	880	3500	75
Ultimate Luxury	48,000	L4TD/2.2	A6	400	133	2170	880	3500	75
Ult. Luxury XLV	49,500	L4TD/2.2	A6	400	133	2170	880	3500	75

REXTON

The South Korean manufacturer's large wagon now has three variants and a smooth-shifting eight-speed auto gear box. It is loaded with kit and comes with a lean price tag.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
ELX	50,000	L4TD/2.2	A8	441	148	2233	727	3500	70
Adventure	54,000	L4TD/2.2	A8	441	148	2233	727	3500	70
Ultimate	58,000	L4TD/2.2	A8	441	148	2233	727	3500	70
Ultimate Sport	60,000	L4TD/2.2	A8	441	148	2233	727	3500	70

SUZUKI

3-year/100,000km **www.suzuki.com.au**

JIMNY

Pint-sized cult classic returns in fourth-gen guise. Live axles front and rear and retro styling means it will remain a favourite on the off-road scene.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
3-door Hardtop	28,490	L4/1.5	M5	130	75	1095	340	1300	40
3-door Hardtop	29,990	L4/1.5	A4	130	75	1110	325	1300	40

TOYOTA

5-year/unlimited km **www.toyota.com.au**

PRADO

The all-new 250 Prado is here. It is porkier than the 150, has lower payloads, less fuel capacity, higher tow-rating, the 2.8TD donk carries over, and prices have jumped, so it's a curious mix. Will sell like crazy.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
GX	72,500	I4TD/2.8	A8	500	150	2495	605	3500	110
GXL	79,990	I4TD/2.8	A8	500	150	2535	615	3500	110
VX	87,400	I4TD/2.8	A8	500	150	2570	610	3500	110
Altitude	92,700	I4TD/2.8	A8	500	150	2520	660	3500	110
Kakadu	99,990	I4TD/2.8	A8	500	150	2595	605	3500	110

FORTUNER

Toyota's HiLux-based seven-seat wagon competes with Ford Everest, Mitsubishi Pajero Sport and Isuzu MU-X. Smaller than a Prado but still a proper 4x4 wagon.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
GX	53,775	I4TD/2.8	A6	500	150	2175	625	3100	80
GXL	58,895	I4TD/2.8	A6	500	150	2185	615	3100	80
Crusade	66,755	I4TD/2.8	A6	500	150	2190	610	3100	80

LAND CRUISER 300 SERIES

It's out with the V8s and in with an all-new V6 diesel engine in the new 300 Series Land Cruiser. There are now six models in the range including the new GR Sport and Sahara ZX models.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	–TOWING	FUEL
GX	97,990	V6TD/3.3L	A10	700	227	2495	785	3500	110
GXL	110,820	V6TD/3.3L	A10	700	227	2580	700	3500	110
VX	122,510	V6TD/3.3L	A10	700	227	2630	650	3500	110
Sahara	139,310	V6TD/3.3L	A10	700	227	2630	650	3500	110
GR Sport	146,160	V6TD/3.3L	A10	700	227	2630	650	3500	110
Sahara ZX	146,910	V6TD/3.3L	A10	700	227	2610	670	3500	110

LAND CRUISER 70

The 70 Series Cruiser has built a reputation as a load-hauler extraordinaire. Available as long-wheelbase Troopie or five-door, mid-wheelbase wagon.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
WorkMate Troopy	77,200	I4TD/2.8	M5	450	150	N/A	N/A	3500	130
GXL Troopy	80,500	I4TD/2.8	A6	500	150	2360	1115	3500	130
WorkMate wagon	75,600	I4TD/2.8	A6	500	150	2320	1190	3500	130
GXL Wagon	77,800	I4TD/2.8	A6	500	150	2300	1210	3500	130

LAND CRUISER 70 CAB-CHASSIS

Still the king of the country when it comes to a reliable workhorse. Safety updates and that steady 2.8TD with six-speed auto is a winning combo.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
WorkMate single c/c	76,800	I4TD/2.8	A6	500	150	2145	1365	3500	130
GX single c/c	78,800	I4TD/2.8	A6	500	150	2130	1380	3500	130
GXL single c/c	80,900	I4TD/2.8	A6	500	150	2130	1380	3500	130

LAND CRUISER 79 DOUBLE CAB

Tough-as-nails and with room for five, the LC79 dual-cab uses the 2.8TD engine backed by a smooth-shifting six-speed auto (for $2k less, you can opt for a five-speed manual).

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
WorkMate dual c/c	77,300	I4TD/2.8	A6	500	150	2205	1310	3500	130
GXL dual c/c	81,500	I4TD/2.8	A6	500	150	2185	1325	3500	130

HILUX

The N80 Hilux with a new 2.8-litre engine, six-speed transmissions and a beefed-up towing capacity. A facelift and more power for the 2021 model adds to its appeal.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
W'Mate Single c/c	40,965	I4TD/2.4	M6	400	110	1775	1225	3200	80
W'Mate Extra c/c	46,665	I4TD/2.4	A6	400	110	1890	1110	3000	80
W'Mate Dual c/c	48,735	I4TD/2.4	A6	400	110	1915	1085	3000	80
W'Mate Dual p/u	48,235	I4TD/2.4	M6	400	110	2045	955	3200	80
W'Mate Dual p/u	50,420	I4TD/2.4	A6	400	110	2045	955	3000	80
SR Single c/c	44,035	I4TD/2.8	M6	420	150	1795	1205	3500	80
SR Single c/c	44,590	I4TD/2.8	A6	500	150	1795	1205	3200	80
SR Extra c/c	48,695	I4TD/2.8	M6	420	150	1890	1110	3500	80
SR Extra c/c	48,695	I4TD/2.8	A6	500	150	1895	1155	3200	80
SR Dual c/c	50,955	I4TD/2.8	M6	420	150	1955	1045	3500	80
SR Dual c/c	54,130	I4TD/2.8	A6	500	150	1955	1045	3200	80
SR Dual p/u	52,640	I4TD/2.8	M6	420	150	2050	950	3500	80
SR Dual p/u	56,210	I4TD/2.8	A6	500	150	2045	955	3200	80
SR5 Extra p/u	60,250	I4TD/2.8	A6	500	150	2045	1005	3200	80
SR5 Dual p/u	60,670	I4TD/2.8	M6	420	150	2040	960	3500	80
SR5 Dual p/u	63,260	I4TD/2.8	A6	500	150	2045	955	3200	80
Rogue Dual p/u	71,530	I4TD/2.8	A6	500	150	2174	826	3200	80
Rugged X Dual p/u	69,990	I4TD/2.8	A6	500	150	2252	748	3200	80
GR Sport	73,990	I4TD/2.8	A6	550	165	N/A	N/A	3500	80

VOLKSWAGEN

5-year/unlimited km **www.volkswagen.com.au**

AMAROK

The second-gen Amarok shares much of its underpinnings with the next-gen Ford Ranger. Four engines are on offer in the line-up including the V6 shared with the Ford, as well as a 2.3-litre petrol.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL
TDI405 Core	50,990	L4TD/2.0	M6	405	125	2185	1065	3500	80
TDI405 Core	52,990	L4TD/2.0	A6	405	125	2208	1042	3500	80
TDI500 Life 2.0	56,990	L4TD/2.0	A10	500	154	2242	988	3500	80
TDI500 Style	66,990	L4TD/2.0	A10	500	154	2271	1009	3500	80
TDI600 Style	70,990	V6TD/3.0	A10	600	184	2319	1031	3500	80
TDI600 PanAm	75,990	V6TD/3.0	A10	600	184	2319	1031	3500	80
TDI600 Aventura	79,990	V6TD/3.0	A10	600	184	2332	858	3500	80
TSI452 Aventura	79,990	L4P/2.3	A8	452	222	2228	872	3500	80

KGM SHOWS HYBRID MUSSO UTE

KGM Australia has shown a Musso EV, which is set to go on sale from 1 December at select KGM dealers.

The Musso EV is powered by an 80.6kWh Lithium Iron Phosphate (LFP) blade battery, renowned for its exceptional durability and heat resistance. The 2WD model features a 152kW front motor delivering 339Nm of torque, while the AWD variant adds a 152kW/339Nm rear motor and boosts the combined system output to 266kW and 630Nm.

It will be available in a pair of 2WD models, with a single AWD variant priced at $64,000 drive-away.

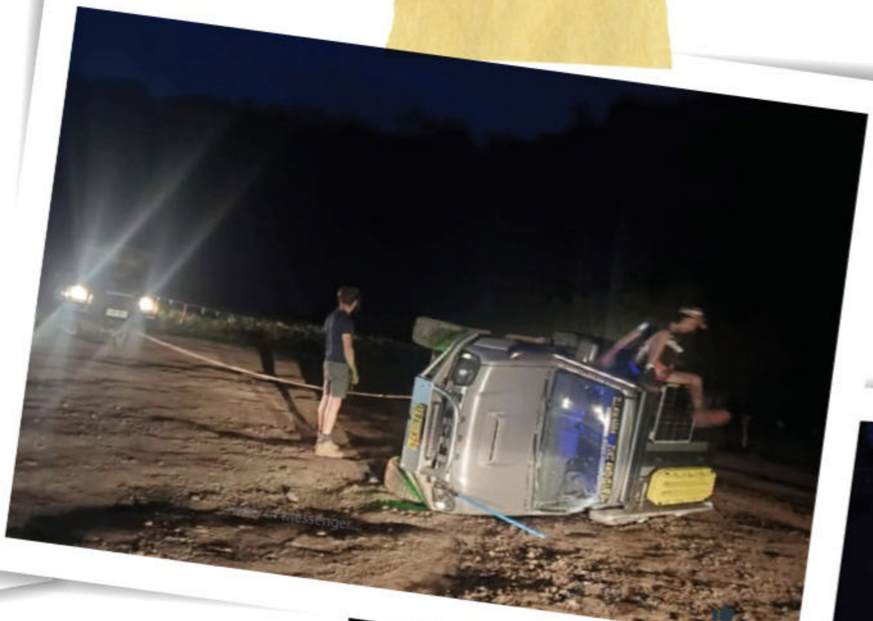
KGM is claiming an 805kg payload for the 3090kg GVM Musso EV, with a 1800kg maximum braked towing capacity.

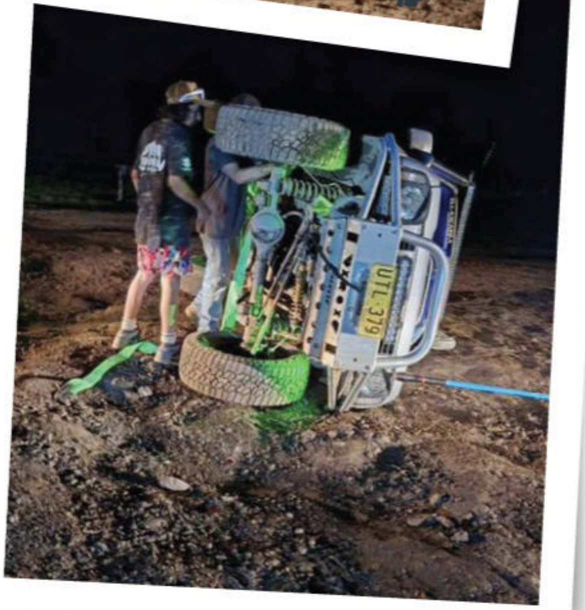
With those sorts of numbers, the Musso EV will hardly be challenging the leaders in the ute field, but it does offer another entry into the electrified ute showroom in Australia.

A replacement for the ageing conventional Musso ute is due around the middle of 2026.

PARTING PIC

SEND TO OUR FB PAGE: @4X4AUS





DONUT DISASTER

SHAUN DREGHORN

> NSW

A simple bit of fun on a burnout pad turned into a costly lesson for Shaun and his modified Jimny after a split-second mistake tipped the pint-sized 4x4 onto its side.

"I was at a 4WD park in NSW on my 4WD club's Christmas party," Shaun told us. "We went for a night drive out towards the playground area – as we got there we greeted with a burnout pad."

Naturally, Shaun decided to try a donut on the empty pad and engaged the rear air locker – but as the Jimny came around, the rear left tyre caught the edge of the pad and the whole thing was over almost instantly.

Fortunately, Shaun had plenty of people around to check he was okay, and a Patrol soon winched the Jimny back onto all four wheels.

"It was definitely an eye opener for how quickly things go wrong… and to teach you to grow up a bit, as it was a very expensive rebuild," explained Shaun.

The Jimny was running a 1.3 with a Toyota Soarer turbo. Other mods included a four-inch lift; 255/70R16s; WRX seats; an XROX bullbar; drawers; dual-battery set-up; Rola Titan tray; roof rack with custom mounts; and a rear ARB Air Locker. Shaun says the vehicle is now mid-rebuild, reshelled into another Suzuki Jimny.

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